

MOTHER INDIA

APRIL 24, 1971

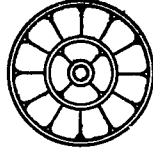
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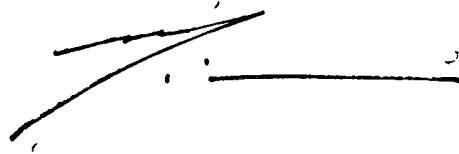
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIII

No. 3

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

(1)

Nous ne sommes justement pas à une époque où les hommes sont abandonnés à leurs propres moyens.

Le Divin a envoyé Sa conscience pour les éclairer.

Tous ceux qui en sont capables, doivent en profiter.

We are precisely not at an epoch where men are left to their own means.

The Divine has sent down His consciousness to enlighten them.

All those who are capable of it, should profit.

(2)¹

We are at one of these "Hours of God", when the old bases get shaken, and there is a great confusion; but it is a wonderful opportunity for those who want to leap forward, the possibility of progress is exceptional.

Will you not be of those who take advantage of it?

Let your body be prepared through physical education for this great change!

My blessings to all.

I-4-1971

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My love and blessings are with you.

Understand that blessings are for the best spiritual result, not necessarily according to human wishes.

¹ Message given to the Department of Physical Education.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of March 1971)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

MARCH 14, 1956

“The practice of this Yoga demands a constant inward remembrance of the one central liberating knowledge... In all is the one Self, the one Divine is all; all are in the Divine, all are the Divine and there is nothing else in the universe,—this thought or this faith is the whole background until it becomes the whole substance of the consciousness of the Worker. A memory, a self-dynamising meditation of this kind, must and does in its end turn into profound and uninterrupted vision and a vivid and all-embracing consciousness of that which we so powerfully remember or on which we so constantly meditate.”

(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 127)

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by “a self-dynamising meditation”?

It is a meditation that has the power of transforming your being. It is a meditation which makes you progress, as opposed to static meditation which is immobile and relatively inert, and which changes nothing in your consciousness nor in your way of being. A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation.

Generally, people do not practise dynamic meditation. When they enter into meditation (or at least what they call “meditation”), they enter into a kind of immobility where nothing stirs—and they come out of it exactly as they went in, without any change either in their being or in their consciousness. And the more motionless it is, the happier they are. They could meditate in this way for eternities, it would never change anything either in the universe or in themselves. That is why Sri Aurobindo speaks of dynamic meditation which is exactly its very opposite. It is a transforming meditation.

How is it done? Is it done in a different way?

I think it is the aspiration that should be different, the attitude has to be different. "Different way", what do you mean by "way"—(*laughing*) the way of sitting?... Not that? The inner attitude?

Yes.

But for everyone it is different.

I think the most important thing is to know why one meditates; it is that which gives the quality of the meditation, which makes it of one order or another.

You may meditate to open to the divine Force, you may meditate to reject the ordinary consciousness, you may meditate to enter the depths of your being, you may meditate to learn how to give yourself integrally; you may meditate for all sorts of things. You may meditate to enter into peace and calm and silence (that is what people generally do, but without much success). But you may also meditate to receive the Force of transformation, to discover the points to be transformed, to trace out the line of progress. And then, you may also meditate for very practical reasons: when you have a difficulty to clear up, a solution to find, when you want help in some action or other. You may meditate for that also.

I think everyone has his own mode of meditation. But if one wants the meditation to be dynamic, one must have an aspiration for progress and the meditation must be done to help and fulfil this aspiration for progress. Then it becomes dynamic.

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: "No matter what the gift and to whom it is presented by us..." and then "there must be a consciousness in the act that we are presenting it to the one divine Being".

(*Ibid.*, p. 126)

These two phrases are contradictory, aren't they?

No, my child. That's because you don't understand the turn of the phrase. This means: no matter what the gift we make and to whom we make it, provided that it is done as an act of consecration to the Divine.

That is what I always tell people in other terms: whatever work you do—whether you go to an office, keep accounts, drive a car, anything—whatever the work you do, and naturally for whomsoever you do it, it must be an offering to the Divine. In doing it, you ought to keep the remembrance of the Divine and do it as an expression of your consecration to the Divine. This is what Sri Aurobindo says, not anything else.

Sweet Mother, I have a question to ask you, but it is not my own, it is someone else's.

Ah! let us see.

Why? Is that person not here?.., Or is he afraid to speak! All right, ask your question.

It is often said, or predicted, that the numbers 2.3.4.5.6. (23rd. April, 56) will have a special significance for the Ashram. Is this true?

I could reply with a joke, if you like. There's talk now about changing the calendar; if it is changed, the numbers will be changed, and then the whole story will have gone, taken flight!

It is a convention, isn't it?

Evidently, if the convention is generalised, as in the case of the calendar, it may become a very powerful formation. But it must be very extensively adopted to become a powerful formation (what I call "formations" are images which can be animated by a force and taken as symbols). There are people who make their own images and take them as their own symbols; and for them these may be very useful and valid, as, for instance, the symbols of dreams. But these are valid only for them, they are purely subjective. Whilst, if you take the calendar which is adopted by almost the whole of humanity, your symbol can act on a much more extensive field; but the origin is the same, it is a convention. Naturally, these are things to which we are accustomed, for they have been like that since our childhood; but all this depends on the country of one's birth and the community wherein one is born.

There are communities which count differently. And so, for them, other numbers at other times have a symbolic significance. Only, if our formation (that in which you are born, which you have adopted), if this formation is adopted by the vast majority of men, you will be able to act upon this majority by acting through this formation. You can act through a formation only to the extent to which it is adopted by a certain number of people. It is purely conventional. We began counting from a certain date—which, besides, was chosen quite arbitrarily—and so the numbers came to be what they are today. But, for instance, one has only to betake oneself to a Muslim community, where counting started from—I don't know whether it is the birth or the death of Mohammed—and their numbers are quite different. So, if you go and tell them: 2.3.4.5.6., they will say: what does that mean, your number 2.3.4.5.6.? Nothing at all.

These things can be taken usefully as symbols and a means of putting a more subtle world in contact with a more material world. They may be used in this way, that's all.

But if, instead of the millions of people using the present calendar, there were only three or four, it would be useless to say that these numbers are symbolic. They would be symbolic only for these three or four. Hence, it is not the thing in itself which counts, it is the extent of its usage. It is that which is important.

People make the same mistake with the stars and horoscopes. It is quite simply

a language and a convention, and if this convention is adopted, it may be utilised to do a certain work. But it has only a relative value in proportion to the number of people adopting it.

In this relative world, everything is necessarily relative. So things should not be taken literally, for that leads to narrow-mindedness.

The more they are primitive, the more are people simple-minded, and the more do these things take on a superstitious turn. Superstitions are simply an abused generalisation of a particular fact.

I always give the example of a person passing under a ladder. At the top of the ladder a workman is doing something and, by an unlucky coincidence, he drops an instrument on the head of the passer-by and cracks it—that can happen, it is a true fact, and the man’s head is smashed. But someone, who sees this accident, later makes a general rule and says: “To walk under a ladder is a sign of misfortune”—that is a superstition. And this is how all these things come about.

But also many facts of knowledge have exactly the same origin. For instance, if a certain medicine, through a concurrence of favourable circumstances has cured a certain number of people, immediately it is proclaimed that this medicine is unfailling for this disease. But that is not true. And the proof is that if the same medicine is administered in the same way to a hundred people, there won’t be two similar results, and sometimes the effects will be diametrically opposite. Consequently, it is not the property of the medicine itself which cures; to believe in this medicine is a superstition.

And fundamentally there is a very slight difference between science and superstitions. Perhaps it lies only in the care taken in expressing things. If one takes care, as the scientists do, to say: “It seems this may be like that... one would say that... everything combines to make us think...”, so there, there’s no longer any superstition! But otherwise when one says: “It is like that”, that’s necessarily a superstition. You see.

So, to the person who asked you the question you should reply thus: if with 3.4.5.6. or with 2.3.4.5.6. something exceptional happens to you and you have an inner or outer revelation, you could announce that it is an exceptional date. But if nothing happens to you, it will not be an exceptional date for you at all; it will be a date like all others!

(silence)

There was a very old tradition, very, very old, older even than the Vedic tradition here, which said: “If twelve men of good will unite and call the Divine, the Divine is obliged to come.” Well, perhaps this is true, perhaps a superstition. Perhaps it depends on the twelve men of good will and what they are. Perhaps it depends on other things also. If you ask me, I think that probably it happened like this, that at the beginning twelve men gathered together (there happened to be twelve, perhaps even

they themselves did not know why) and they were so closely united in their aspiration, an aspiration so intense and powerful, that they got the response. But to say: "If twelve men of good will are united in an aspiration, they will surely bring down the Divine," is a superstition.

In fact, things must have happened like that, and the one who noted it put it down carefully: "If twelve men of good will unite their aspiration, the Divine is obliged to come." And since that time, I may tell you, a considerable number of groups of twelve men have united in a common aspiration... and they did not bring down the Divine! But all the same the tradition has been left intact.

There we are.

We are many more than twelve here this evening. (*Laughter*) Let us try once and see if it succeeds!

(*Meditation*)

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

I THOUGHT that my letter, however brief, would make clear my reason for not writing more - viz. that X was not leaving the Ashram for good or as a derelict or a failure. That is evident from his own statements and expressions in his letter and unless I assume these to be falsehoods, how can I treat him as a derelict and a failure and set out to explain his fall? That would be like explaining the cause of a headache when there was no headache. The only thing I could explain and set out at length was the struggle in himself (a vital not mental struggle) from which he precipitately sought a temporary escape; but that I cannot do since it involves writing about things personal to him and private; he would certainly dislike my writing about them to others than himself. That was the reason for my silence.

As for the other matter, the Mother had taken a decision before you wrote and it was the only one possible. Y's wife coming here would mean the destruction of Mother's work in him and of his peace and recovered balance. Already she had met and upset him and if she had stayed till the Darshan that would have happened again and again. Her demand for Darshan and Pranam (to which she has no claim whatever as she is not a disciple and came without permission) was only a manoeuvre by which she could get in the thin end of the wedge and figure as a devotee and so hope to put up a claim for entering the Ashram which would have been the end of Y. I had explained through Nirod that it was impossible to allow her because of Y and why. I did not explain specially about the request for Pranam—that logically hangs on to the rest. She did not come here out of any personal devotion to the Mother; she was quite prepared to go to Raman-ashram in her seeking for the Divine if she could not get in here; that was the best she could do, since we were not prepared to offer up Y as a sacrifice;—and so it was arranged. I hope these things are now perfectly clear.

P.S. By the way, why does everybody assume that such and such a sadhak must be above difficulties and crises? I should think that such immunity, even among great Yogis, must be very rare.

November 18, 1942.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of March 1971)

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manlal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.

We are interrupting the sequence of the Talks with a few that were somehow left out. Once these have been published, we shall resume the usual series.)

NOVEMBER 21, 1939

Dr. M arrived in the afternoon.

M *(after doing pranam to Sri Aurobindo)*: How are you, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO *(smiling)*: Status quo.

M: Is the leg better?

SRI AUROBINDO: In some ways better, in some ways not. And how are you?

M: Getting on, Sir; how do you find me?

SRI AUROBINDO: You look flourishing!

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO *(to M)*: What's the news? Baroda has declared war on Germany?

M: Seems only in writing. Even an insolvent State has offered to help the Government!

P: Why, it can help with other people's money!

M: Do you think Government will give something?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not likely so long as the Muslim League and others go on like that and don't unite.

M: Jinnah gave one of the finest speeches of his life and he talks of unity etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense! You can't take politicians' words at their face value. You have to see what they do. He is going on just in his old way.

M: This war doesn't seem to have begun even. It must be that some peace proposal is going on.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Each party may be afraid of the other and so doesn't want to attack as it would mean a tremendous loss of life. In the air, if Germany attacks London, Berlin may be attacked by England. So they are trying to make it an economic war. (*Addressing P*) I have finished Selincourt's book on Blake, which he ends by saying that all art is spiritual, all art is mystical.

P: What would Shakespeare say to it?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, he means only the art of painting. "Spiritual" he uses perhaps in the old foolish way meaning something idealistic.

N: You have said in *The Synthesis of Yoga* that the conscious art of art should be to express God and His principles in everything, in objects, persons. Now how can one express God in a landscape, for instance? I thought: could it be an aspect of His beauty, vastness etc?

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case, all artists do it.

N: Yes, so I argued but you have said "conscious aim"; some may not do it consciously.

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on the context. But I suppose I meant a Divine Reality behind everything. Do you mean God in the religious sense?

P: Perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I did not refer to that but to the Reality behind.

N: Even so, how can one express it?

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to see it first and then express it.

N: Are there any examples where it has been done?

SRI AUROBINDO: In Eastern Art, in human figures something has been achieved.

N: But in landscapes do you know any artist who has done it?

SRI AUROBINDO: In Japanese drawings of flowers, landscapes, there is some expression of the Reality.

NOVEMBER 22, 1939

M: Where can the souls of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda be? Have they taken birth again?

SRI AUROBINDO: You have to enquire at the Foreign Office of the world.

M: You said Vivekananda came to you in jail.

SRI AUROBINDO: When he came he could not have taken birth again.

M: But now?

SRI AUROBINDO: He may have or he may be in the silent Brahman unless Brahman has sent him down. According to the Puranas he may be in Saptaloka.

M: The Puranas can't be believed! Plenty of unreasonable stories!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? What about the Upanishads? There are also such stories.

M: Then the Puranas are true?

SRI AUROBINDO: Except for the stories which are meant to illustrate truths.

M: I will ask now a big question. People say that you can by your Power bring your injured leg to normal condition if you wish to do it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't wish anything. If it is meant to come it will.

N: But suppose you wanted it?

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean if it is possible to do it? Quite possible.

N: Then why not do it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can't be done in a day. It requires much concentration for which I have no time.

M: But won't it be profitable in the long run?

SRI AUROBINDO: But I have other things to do.

After this there was a lull.

N: He doesn't seem to be satisfied with the answer.

M: Can it be brought back to normality?

SRI AUROBINDO: It has to be seen. But why is it a big question? It seems to be a small question to me.

N: Perhaps the result will be big especially from the medical point of view. Dr. M finds now that from the medical point of view there is no chance. So he wants to satisfy his conscience by knowing if Yogic Force can do it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*addressing M*): Perhaps your self-interest stands in the way. If the leg becomes all right, you will ask for resuming the daily correspondence and 8 hours' Darshan again.

M: Could it not be possible to cure everything in the wink of an eye by the Supramental Force? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: It will have to be the Supreme Supramental Force. I am not a Tirthankar.

M: In Jainism — (*Laughter by all*)—a story is told of a yogi curing his leprosy by his own saliva.

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ is also said to have cured someone's blindness by his saliva.

M: But he was crucified.

SRI AUROBINDO: What of that?

M: Didn't he suffer then?

SRI AUROBINDO: He didn't say no to the crucifixion.

M: Why did he not prevent it? Wasn't it due to his past Karma?

SRI AUROBINDO: How can it be when he said he was the Son of God? He said he had come down to be crucified for your sins. He took upon himself (*with emphasis*) all your sins.

M: They say Gandhi is an incarnation of Christ.

SRI AUROBINDO: Incarnation? What can be said is that there are things in his teachings which are similar to Christ's.

M: What about the Congress? Will it succeed? (*Laughter*)

N: You seem to be jumping.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after a while*): Not exactly. Gandhi provided the transition.

NOVEMBER 24, 1939

M: While meditating I had a momentary vision of a Bakul tree with violet flowers. What meaning, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: May be symbolic. Does anybody know the significance of Bakul?

C: Patience! (*Laughter*) So it means you must have patience.

N: And violet?

SRI AUROBINDO: It has many meanings. May be Krishna's compassion.

M: Patience till eternity?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, you must think as if all eternity were before you.

S: Krishna is a very difficult God. Shiva would have been easy to satisfy.

P: Yes, he doesn't care for consequences. Krishna has to come afterwards to help out of the situation.

M: Shiva seems to give boons to Asuras, sometimes to both the opposite parties in the fight, sometimes boons which are contradictory to former ones.

SRI AUROBINDO: He says, "This fellow has done some tapasya, let me give him something." He is also Bholanath; he doesn't remember what he has given.

M: In the Puranas it is seen that his boons lead sometimes to destruction.

S: He is also the God of destruction.

M: Yes, and he runs away from the destruction!

SRI AUROBINDO: He doesn't care for destruction any more than for running away.

M: Why did God create this world? Was He very unhappy?

N: Do you create out of unhappiness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why unhappy? He may have created the world for fun. "Let me create Manilal to see what he does," He may have said.

N (*after some time*): Dr. Amiya Sankar wants to know if and how one can get direct guidance in work.

SRI AUROBINDO: Guidance from whom? From me? I am not a doctor.

N: No, inner guidance.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can get guidance by opening of the inner being, psychic, inner mental or even vital. Only, the psychic is more sure.

M: How to open the psychic?

SRI AUROBINDO: There are many ways.

M: Please tell us one or two.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can get the opening by making the mind quiet, or by turning one's mind towards the Divine or by separating oneself from one's movements and trying to keep them away by mental or other control.

N: Turning one's mind to the Divine would mean the rejection of desires etc.

at the same time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessarily. When the mind is turned, that helps to awaken the Divine element that is in oneself and the rejection may follow.

M: But the rejection is so difficult. I have been trying to control anger for such a long time but when the moment comes I am simply carried away.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because you are still trying with the mind and you want still to have the anger.

M: How? I want to reject it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but some part in you must be wanting it. Otherwise it can't remain.

M: But I am not conscious.

SRI AUROBINDO: But are you conscious of everything in yourself?

M: Can the psychic, after opening, close up again?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, if you ignore it, it can get clouded. Sometimes people mistake the inner mental opening for the psychic. Of course it doesn't matter very much from the practical point of view. The psychic is behind all these inner mental and vital planes.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of March 1971)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in these talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But, in reconstructing from memory, the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

THE world exists apart from individual centres of consciousness, apart from individual impressions; but it does not exist apart from all consciousness: it exists in Brahman who is the ultimate consciousness as well as being.

Berkeley carried the "idealistic" doctrine too far, saying that when we go out of a room the chairs do not exist and that when we enter they exist. The fact is: outside objects do exist, material forms exist and have certain objective qualities. We contact them with our instruments and as a result we have taste, sight, sound, smell, touch—in short, subjective impressions. Both the objective and the subjective are necessary. No doubt, I have the power in me to change bitter into sweet—I can make the mind give a different reaction, but even in that case there must be an unknown quality X in the object, and there must be my contact with it through the sense-instrument. Thus, the taste is not in the tongue—the tongue is only the instrument of sensation, the taste arises from the "I" contacting an object and its quality through the mind and the tongue.

Pragmatism holds that truth is what is workable, or truth is that which can effectuate itself. From the highest standpoint this is right, for knowledge and will, conception and effectuation are one, but in the mind-plane this oneness is not there.

If all is prearranged, where is freedom for the individual? Take, for instance, the Great War. Here the rational view of things is not to be ignored in any complete evaluation. Reason sees that there was a lot of diplomacy bringing about the war. It is a fact that men were concerned, they played their part, they were not just played off. It is their rascality that led to the war. To say that all was done from above in the sense that these people were merely played off or mechanically driven like puppets is not true. What common-sense sees—namely, the treachery and cunning behind—may not be the whole truth, but it must not be rejected. The whole truth is that God does not

drive those people like machines but respects individual choice, initiative, capacity, effort and works according to them. One may fight or break his head against the Higher Will in vain, but one does choose, does strive. There is a certain free-will and initiative in persons, and God works through them, not ignoring them: He works according to their nature. We do not say it is all masterful will on the part of men, but some will is there: even the worm has a certain capacity. It may seem to be all mechanical in the undeveloped man, but the choice is still present. One may say human effort is useless against God; yet it does not follow that man has not a certain freedom. Similarly, everything may have been decided above, but the decision works itself out according to man's nature. If everything is prearranged, man's freedom also is prearranged. In the case of the Great War it may be that there were some vital forces behind, seeking enjoyment in destruction. God sees all this, sees also what must be realised and ordains the result.

In looking at nature, we look with a certain catholicity in our minds, and in that atmosphere everything seems beautiful. When we look at nature, therefore, we are near the universal point of view. But in nature there is much that is unbeautiful—for example, the insect world, the world of worms.

That a vital force is behind physical beauty is clear from the fact that where there is a free play of love in marriage the children born are generally beautiful.

In theory inner beauty must go with physical beauty, but it does not happen so in actual life. A woman may be physically beautiful but wicked. We can say "it is the soul that doth the body make" in reference to rebirth: the soul prepares or enters a suitable body.

The Superman will look no age at all. The body of the Superman need not be changed in form from man's. There must be the brain, it is the necessary nerve-end, so to say. But the bodily functioning must be changed: for example, he will go clean out of the doctor's province.

The conditions for the Superman are:

- (1) There should be openness from top to bottom down to the lowest material.
- (2) His consciousness should be seated in the highest Supermind or even above it.
- (3) All his movements—mental, vital, physical—must be reorganised.

Supermind coming down into mind modifies the mind and, in that act, is itself modified. When all the movements of mind are intuitivised, then you have the intuitive functioning of Supermind in mind.

Intuition in comparison to the sheer truth of the Supermind is a sort of glorified guess. Representative Supermind (described in the *Arya*) is a certain stage in reaching the Supermind, not the Supermind itself but Supermind coming into mind. The distinction between the representative and the revelatory Supermind is not so sharp in experience: there is a revelatory element in the representative Supermind.

As the mind is being intuitivised more and more, the higher realities begin to manifest. It is not necessary that the physical be completely opened before the Supermind manifests. Above the Supermind is the Ananda plane.

The Vedic Goddess Saraswati and the Vedic Gods in their own home belong to the supramental. But when they come down into the intuitive mind they take the form called Saraswati (Inspiration). The mental movements are replaced by the movements of Vijnana. Life itself becomes conscious force, full of the light of Truth—no longer a blind movement, but full of the rhythm of Truth. All the movements of life and body must be supramentalised.

The Truth-Power has to be brought down into the consciousness even of the cells. The cells admit the consciousness, for they are not dead matter. The cells become conscious of the higher Ananda and Truth-Power. The physical pain or pleasure changes into physical Ananda, just as the mind becomes conscious of Ananda on the mental level. Now in the present balance of forces, in certain conditions a shock to the body gives pain. You change the conditions and the physical law changes; what was physical pain becomes physical Ananda.

The electron is not the last word. We have to go behind the electron and see what is there. If you get at that, you can even change the electron. Of course we are not going to change the universe altogether or, for the matter of that, the whole state of our body except in so far as it is necessary in changing the conditions for the Supramental Power to manifest.

There is life, there is mind in many inventions of man. A watch responds to your thought and will (apart from functioning automatically). That means it has a mind, otherwise how can it answer your thought? It is not that the watchmaker put it inside, for how could he do it? It is not that mind is itself involved in it merely, for mind is involved in matter generally, and it gives indications through phenomena like fatigue in metals; but, in the watch, mind is active, for it is actively giving response. And wherever there is mind, there is life as a basis of its activity. Similarly there is life in engines, steamers, motorcars.

Q: How does the watch respond to our thought and will?

If you will that it must go rightly, neither slow nor fast, it does. Of course, if it is spoiled, it will not go on. The necessary mechanical basis must be there. If you want that it should jump off the table, it will not. There are other things also which answer your will. Thus you can make a match burn on till a certain work with it is finished. Not all matches, though, will burn like that. And if you do these extraordinary things with a desire to save money, you will not succeed.

(To be continued)

N. CHIDANANDAM.

SRI AUROBINDO'S WORK IN THE WORLD

We give below some excerpts from talks given by Navajata on his return to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, from a tour abroad.

He visited France, Russia, Finland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, England, Ireland, U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Hongkong, to study the situation first-hand and to invite participation from all countries, in the establishment of Auroville and in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Celebration on August 15, 1972. Everywhere he found the people ready for a big change.

Navajata attended the UNESCO General Conference in October and November, 1970, in his dual capacity as adviser to the Indian Delegation and as representative of the Sri Aurobindo Society which is a member of UNESCO. On this occasion, on behalf of the Government of India, he presented the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Resolution which was adopted by the General Assembly. The other resolution on Auroville was also duly passed.

Navajata discussed with various delegations the problems of the present world and their solution as pre-visionsed by Sri Aurobindo and the formation of Sri Aurobindo Centres and Auroville Associations in their respective countries.

My intention in speaking to you today of the world-work of Sri Aurobindo was really to discuss with you the programme of the future. But some friends who were not present at the time when I gave a report at the playground have asked me also to recount some of my experiences abroad.

You know, the last year's message of the Mother was, "The world is preparing for a big change." The full or rather deeper meaning of this message dawned on me, when I undertook this tour of various places. When I was in UNESCO, I was told that a young Electrical Engineer had been trying to meet me for three days. I at once found time to meet him. The Engineer told me that when he had first read an article on Auroville in the French Magazine *Planète*, he could accept only 10% of it and the rest he had put aside, and then he had read it again and again, and come to the conclusion that it was the only solution for the problems of the world, the only thing worth doing in life, the only thing which could fulfil him. He now wants to come here. That is how the world is preparing for a big change.

People who are ready for a new life, who are thinking in the same direction and people who see the problems and have not yet found the answers, all these are looking to Auroville for a solution.

They have come to a stage where they feel the limitations of human life and of human mind. When I was discussing Auroville with the Secretary General of the

UNESCO Commission in one of the European countries, he said, "Sir, give me one more set of Auroville literature. My daughter—I have only one daughter—has gone to live in a commune. She is not satisfied with our life today and I am not satisfied with the life in a commune. I really do not know what is the solution." When I met the youth leaders, they told me that the youth are not satisfied with the present society. This life of going to office at 10 o'clock and returning at 5 o'clock—this has no meaning for them. They have become conscious that it is not for earning money only that they should live. Until now most of the older generation was quite happy living to earn money, to earn their livelihood. That attitude has gone now. This is a very good sign.

Wherever I went I made it a point not only to meet the government representatives or the heads of big organisations, but to draw out the common man and connect up with his condition everywhere. On planes, in trains, in buses, in restaurants, in lifts, on the road the topic of discussion was always Auroville. And it is interesting how even the Mother's Grace put us into contact with those who were destined to meet us. I may note that I found the common man quite awake to spiritual truths.

In Italy on the stairs of an embassy, a girl approached me and asked, "Sir, can I do anything for you?" As I had an appointment I gave her the Auroville album to glance through. When I came down after my meeting she was waiting for me, very enthusiastic, and said that she had two architect friends who would be very happy to meet me. I found later that her friends were absolutely in harmony with our ideal, because they were seeking for an integral vision of architecture even though they had never heard about Auroville. Both of them got so interested that one of them is trying to come here and the other will work for Auroville in his own country.

Similarly when I was sitting in a restaurant in America a girl was struck by my Indian coat and came and sat down beside me. She asked me many questions and when I asked her what she had studied, most strikingly she replied that at the University her subject had been 'Growth of Consciousness'. Finally she got so interested that she came again to meet me. When I explained to her Sri Aurobindo's philosophy that man was not the last step in evolution, she got up, her face beaming with joy, and exclaimed, "Thank God, man is not the last step of creation." She has volunteered to work for Auroville in America.

Again, once when I was travelling on a train with a young English Engineer, at the next halt a Dutch youth got into our compartment. Now the Englishman started explaining all about Auroville to him and he spoke a great truth even better than I could have done. He said, "They are building not in Auroville, but from Auroville."

I am reminded of another incident. A lady, one Mrs. Smith, who was an health officer in London once went to a very small and poor school in England and spoke about Auroville. After the talk a child got up and asked shyly whether she would accept a small contribution. She said, "Surely", and all the children contributed their pennies and thus offered two pounds. When this sum was given to me I said, "These two pounds are of more value than two million pounds because it is

these young hearts who will build Auroville." And I asked her to send me the names of the school and the children so that I might send them a present from Auroville.

Yes, everywhere the world is ready for a big change. A few years ago when I was invited to America with all expenses paid and a secretary to travel with, the Mother refused permission and this time when I was not invited She on Her own decided to let me go. She must have seen that the world was now preparing for a big change. Wherever I went I found that people of all nations want peace and harmony. They are dissatisfied with the world as it is, with the governments and with the religions and to them Sri Aurobindo comes as a hope—as their only hope. But this also puts a great responsibility on us that we do not betray their trust. The world is looking towards us to lead it out of the present chaos, and we must at each moment consciously mould our lives according to our ideals, so that those who come here see their hopes actually getting realised and do not return disappointed. The world is bound to change. We have the privilege of being the pioneers and if we do not at each moment live as true disciples of Sri Aurobindo, we have missed a great opportunity.

The change has to be big, but we should look not at our incapacities but at the Divine's capacity to bring it about. It is not we but the Divine who is going to do this. And always the means are available for the work to be done, if at each moment we are conscious. If we are conscious there is no problem in the world which cannot be solved.

Sri Aurobindo in his writings has made it clear that the spiritual age will be ushered in, when some people prepare themselves especially, I mean extraordinarily, for the manifestation of the Supramental, and at the same time the whole world feels a need for change. Both these conditions have come about. For us the effort now must be for a quick supramental change.

Wherever I met politicians, industrialists, labour leaders, the problems were many and the solution was none. The great thing was that they were feeling there were no solutions. The Deputy Prime Minister of one country admitted to me very frankly that whatever solutions they were thinking of were all temporary. They could find no permanent solutions.

When I was discussing with U Thant the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Celebrations, I impressed upon him that no political organization could really solve the problems. Unless man's consciousness is changed, unless he evolves into a higher consciousness, there is no way out. People waste too much time and energy and money to find a solution. U Thant told me that we were on the same wave-length. When we came out, the director of his office came to me and said, "Sir, you will succeed. All the people come here with problems. You are the only one who has come with a solution and so you are bound to succeed." He was also extremely helpful in our work.

In Russia after my discussion about Auroville, one of their chief officers asked me what the difference was between communism and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy,

and the man spoke beautiful Hindustani. When I explained to him many points, and emphasised that after the supramental realisation there would be no need for Governments, he took so much interest that he wanted all the books of Sri Aurobindo for the Oriental Institute of Moscow. He said that the Russians would celebrate Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary throughout the country. Really the world is ready for a very big change.

When I was speaking on the Centenary Resolution at UNESCO, the Hungarian delegate on my right, whom I had been seeing for 15 days without knowing that we had common interest in Sri Aurobindo, said, "Sir, I have been reading Sri Aurobindo's philosophy", and the Indonesian on my left leaned over and said, "I have already been to the Ashram." And the Swedish delegate came over and said, "Sir, I also have been reading Sri Aurobindo, and I would like to clarify some points with you." Then the Afghan delegate came and told me, "All our presses, all our facilities are at your disposal for the celebration of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary"

The world is ready for a big change, and what we must discuss today is what we should do.

At the first meeting of the National Centenary Celebrations Committee, Smt. Indra Gandhi mentioned that Sri Aurobindo represented something new and we should not celebrate his centenary like any other centenary, but we should try to realise his ideals. And she added that she saw in Auroville the possibility of presenting to the world a living embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's vision, and that we should try to expedite its realisation. What is important for us today to consider is how best we can make available to the world Sri Aurobindo's message. I remember something very interesting once said by Rockefeller. He said that every asset creates a liability. If you consider money as a trust given to you by God, it is a liability on you to use it for God's purpose. Similarly, if you have any spiritual development, or mental vision, it also casts on you a responsibility to use it for mankind. It is against this background that we should view Sri Aurobindo's ideals.

The Sri Aurobindo Centenary Celebrations require a very well organised plan because of two reasons. Everyone is not at the same level of development. Everyone is not looking in the same direction. Everyone has his own ideas, his own beliefs, his own way of looking at things and yet Sri Aurobindo has a message for everyone. He must reach everyone at his own level and help him to find his own fulfilment. Somebody may be dreaming of a political change in the world, someone of economic change, of a solution for unemployment, someone may be dreaming of the highest literary possibility—Sri Aurobindo has a message for all of them. One may be a sweeper, one may be a king, but in Sri Aurobindo's eyes they are both equal, yet each one is intended to do a different work. And Sri Aurobindo's message will help each one of them to realise his highest possibilities, in his own way. I spent a lot of time abroad studying the life there, the literature, the culture, so that Sri Aurobindo could reach all at their own level, through their own window.

So the important thing to know is that the world is ready for Sri Aurobindo's

message; but are we ready to carry it to the world? Therefore I come to the second thing which I mentioned, how a transformation can come, where every person can occupy the right place and every activity can occupy its right place.

What is the role of money, the role of industry, the role of education, the true role, not the role as we imagine today? We have to change completely our views of life. The Mother has said that we must take a leap into the future. We have to break away from the past, otherwise it would not be a leap. When I came back I told the Mother, "Mother, the world is ready. The only thing is to organize groups of people work-wise, country-wise, so that the transformation can take place." She has given her green signal and that is why we are meeting today to see how we can implement it.

When I was abroad you cannot imagine how much respect I found for Indian spirituality despite some misrepresentations. When you speak to them about Indian spirituality they feel that if they touch you they will become holy. And we shall fail, we shall fail in our duty to God, to our country and to ourselves if we do not fulfil this great expectation of mankind. Those who are connected with the Ashram, whether Indians or foreigners, have a greater responsibility—a greater responsibility to develop the new consciousness in themselves and make it available to mankind. What then will be our work in the world and how shall we proceed with it in an organised manner? But it will not be organised in the usual mental manner—of this we should be very clear.

During my visit to the various countries, I concentrated more on the capitals and met the delegates of nearly 110 countries in UNESCO, and discussed with them their country's programme of how they can participate as a cohesive group in the celebration of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary and work for human unity. Everywhere the response was overwhelming—whether the man belonged to a Catholic country or to an Islamic country, it did not matter. Many of them went out of their way to help me. I did not know enough French. So in a store a man came over and helped me to translate and to get something from the shop, and I did not know who he was. Then he said, "We know you and we are going to vote for you at the UNESCO Conference." He was the Ambassador of Columbia. That is how everywhere the thing has caught the peoples' imagination. In this connection something is very important to note. A very great dignitary when he came to Auroville said with profound respect, "The whole project is God's project." And later when I asked the Mother whether he understood what he was saying the Mother replied, "No, it was his soul which spoke." Similarly when UNESCO voted, it was the Divine who voted. It was He who was making them accept the Resolution consciously or unconsciously. It was not without reason that this resolution came to UNESCO. UNESCO has honoured itself by passing this resolution. And I see that the Divine Hand is behind everything.

To return to our topic, how are we going to celebrate? First, everybody who wants to join should try to make his life a sadhana. If you can't meditate, don't bother about it. As a very dear friend who comes here told me once, "I am not fit for yoga. Till I feel that I am fit for doing yoga seriously, I do not want to come to Pondicherry."

I said, "What do you mean by saying doing yoga seriously? Are you going to realise the Divine by your effort, or is the Divine going to give you realisation? It is not you who chose the Divine, but it is the Divine who chose you." The important thing to know is that, as we are, with all our difficulties, we should work for the Divine. It is my experience that work puts you in contact with the supreme consciousness in such an integral manner as no meditation can do—because it forces a divine linking with you and the Divine has to work through you if He does not want His work to be spoiled. So once you say sincerely to Him, "Use me as I am. All my life, all my mind, all I am I offer to you", He uses you very well, because now the ball is in His hand and it is His responsibility and not yours.

It is not for Sri Aurobindo's good, but for our own good, we are celebrating the Birth Centenary. Our salvation lies in his message. We want to live for the manifestation of the ideals which he has put before us. This decision by us means, we accept Sri Aurobindo as our Guru, the person who has to guide us. Once that acceptance is there, if you have chosen the Divine the Divine has chosen you. Then what is the difficulty except our own stupidity? He will do the rest and He will take us to the goal. He will not leave us halfway. But we also must accept Him fully, and make our whole life His and not offer Him only a portion of it.

In this connection I am reminded of a story of Rabindranath Tagore. He relates that he went out to beg. He saw the Divine Himself coming in his golden chariot. He was very happy that now he would get all he had wanted from the Divine and his poverty would be abolished. The chariot stopped near him. But before he could stretch his hands, the Divine got down and stretched out His hands. Was it a joke? Did the Divine play a trick? The beggar gave the Divine a grain of rice. When he returned home he found that in his begging bowl one grain had turned into gold. Then he struck his head and cried, "If only I had given everything what would have been my fortune!" It shows that the only way to do Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is to offer him all we are, all we have, all we do. There is no other way than a complete and unreserved surrender. And if we are surrendered, I repeat we do not have to bother because immediately the responsibility falls on the Divine. So the first thing that we have to do for Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary is to make our surrender total and integral.

When I wanted to go to Delhi before leaving for Paris there was no seat available. I phoned up all my friends in the Airlines but they said they could do nothing, as even the priority seats had been released, due to a Chief Ministers' Conference. And I had to be in Delhi the very next day. So while going from the Society House to the Ashram I said to myself, "Can't Sri Aurobindo help me?" Believe me, when I reached my room there was a trunk-call waiting for me from a friend in Delhi who wanted me to come immediately to Delhi for some important discussions. I said, "I can't because there is no seat." He replied that from Delhi he would immediately arrange a ticket. Then I got a call from Madras asking whether I had phoned Delhi for a seat and I said, "No, they phoned me." And this kind of thing happened throughout the trip,

whether I was in Western Europe or Russia or America. It is we who do not take courage and stand up to work for the Divine. The Divine Grace is not wanting.

I toured all the countries without appointments, without any special introductions, except the letter which was sent by the Indian Government to the Embassies, and everywhere the appointment was fixed, sometimes at two minutes' notice. I would be sitting with a Secretary of the Government and I would tell him that I wanted to see his Minister. He would say, "How can you? You are leaving the country in two hours and it takes days to fix an appointment." I would still ask him to try, confident that the Mother's work would be done anyhow, and if it was the Minister's destiny to come into contact with the Mother he would call me immediately. Just then the phone would ring asking me to be taken to the Minister immediately. That is how it happened at every place. No planning can do this, no programme can do it. It is only the Grace that can do it.

So the important thing for the Centenary Celebrations is that all of us, for our own fulfilment, should place our whole instrumentality, all our resources, all our capacities, all our contacts at the service of the Divine. This is the first step but this itself will give us a clear vision of our work and path.

Let us now organise the work. Our attempt is to open a Central Secretariat here. I will personally give attention to this department. The help of Indian Embassies, UNESCO Delegations, industrial houses all over the world will be available.

The change is bound to come. As Sri Krishna told Arjuna, we are fighting a winning battle. We have now to organise groups who can look to legal affairs, correspondence, accounts, materials for ready-made talks, slides, films—everything has to be made ready. And I would welcome the co-operation of each one of you. Whoever can give whatever ideas possible, whatever collaboration possible, whether in India or abroad, all are welcome.

This will be the beginning of the world work of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother once told me, "So long as one person remains unchanged in the world, my work is not done." It is only the Divine Mother who can speak like this. And we are her children. Therefore if we want to work for Sri Aurobindo, we must realise that nobody is bad in the world. People are acting under the conditions of ignorance. They will act differently in the conditions of light. The thing to see is how we can create conditions where everyone can occupy his right place in Light, truth and joy without the burden of the past always weighing heavily upon him. We must break the chains so that everyone can be free.

Therefore from today the thing to do is to try and see the Divine everywhere and in everything. The other steps will follow and if we can make this beginning we shall see the force generating itself everywhere.

I shall stop now and all those among you, wherever you may be, if you want to participate in this work you can either come and speak to me or write to me. And we shall see how our work gets organised.

NAVAJATA

A TALK TO THE STUDENTS

AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

This is the report, edited in places, of the first of a new series of three talks given by Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna). The date of the talk was February 24, 1971.

A FEW days back Nirod asked me to give a talk. After much trepidation I agreed, encouraged by some friends. On my own I shy away from talking—except in private, where perhaps I overdo it.

Then a couple of days later he asked me what my subject would be. When I looked at him I suddenly thought of him as he had been before forsaking his first steady love—Medicine—in favour of that capricious Goddess, the Muse. It was Dr. Nirodbaran asking me as if addressing a consultant: “What will you prescribe?” And the response naturally came: “The mixture as before.” (*Laughter*)

Well, what is this repeating mixture? I would say it has three ingredients. One is the Ambrosia that is Sri Aurobindo, the second is the Nectar that is the Mother, and the third is rather a questionable one which can be best expressed perhaps in some lines of Gerald Manley Hopkins:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: the taste was me.

So now you know the third ingredient. All the three form a kind of trinity-in-unity. And this trinity-in-unity may be formulated with a slight difference from the usual, traditional, great formula of the Christians: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Here it would be: the Father, the Mother and the Unholy Son! (*Laughter*) If you like to conform more to the accepted terminology perhaps we could bring back the word “holy”—only we must spell it “holey”—the Son full of holes, riddled with defects and deficiencies, gaps of human ignorance, wounds of common mortality.

And this brings me not only to my subject but also to the Yoga here. Isn't it the aim of the Yogic life to convert what is a “h-o-l-e” into a “w-h-o-l-e”—the limited fragmentary individual consciousness into the divine All, the cosmic abundance, the transcendent plenitude? But how is the conversion to be done? I may approach the answer by recalling what Vasari, an Italian painter of the Renaissance, who has written biographies of the great Masters of the period, has said about Leonardo da Vinci.

He remarks: “With the splendour of his most magnificent face he could make every broken spirit whole.” Now it is interesting that this observation should have been about Leonardo, because, as you surely know, Leonardo is one of the few figures about whom Sri Aurobindo has let us believe, though very indirectly, that he was they in his past births. I used to pester Sri Aurobindo with all sorts of questions,

dangling a long string of names: "Were you Homer, were you Shakespeare, were you Valmiki, Dante, Virgil, Milton?" And he stoutly said "No." I asked him also whether he had been Alexander and Julius Caesar. He replied that Alexander was too much of a torrent for him and, as for Caesar, he said: "You have forgotten that Mrs. Besant claims Julius Caesar. I don't want to be prosecuted for misappropriation of personality." (*Laughter*) He was careful not to encourage commitment in this very delusive field, because once you start thinking who you were, there is no end to the riot of imagination. But, while he said "No" to all, he did not answer in the negative to my proposal of Leonardo and Augustus Caesar. And what Vasari has said about Leonardo's face would apply in a superlative degree to Sri Aurobindo's. Even as I remember his face, all my skin seems to bristle. It is not only sadhaks who have found their shattered spirit entirely rebuilt; even others have been immensely affected. K. M. Munshi, for example, went to see him some years ago, and he came out with the statement that this was the most angelic face he had ever seen. Well, I have tried to catch in general the impression of Sri Aurobindo's face at the beginning of a poem I wrote in the early period of my stay in the Ashram:

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face
 Crowning with calm the body's blinded cry—
 A soul of upright splendour like the noon!

Now, this magnificent face of Sri Aurobindo has a profound meaning in the history of evolution. I believe that the central need of the evolutionary world is Avatarhood. Unless the Divine comes down to earth, man has very little hope of becoming Superman. He may ascend to the spiritual skies, and the soul may remain suspended in "a privacy of glorious light", but his mind will fall away, his life-force will wither, his body will crumble. Where then would be evolution? It is these instruments that have to be fulfilled, and unless they are perfected the cosmic travail cannot be consummated. But these instruments are obstinate creatures, they set conditions to the Divine—they say: "If we are to be divinised, show us that you can be humanised!" I think the conditions are quite legitimate, and the Divine knows it very well and He hurries to become an Avatar every now and then—that is to say, every few thousand years! For, unless the Divine gets on intimate terms with the earth, the earth is unable to respond. And, where intimacy is wanted, the relation has to be of love—if the Divine does not bring love to humanity, humanity will fail to respond to the Divine's call. And how shall solid and concrete earth know Divine Love unless the Divine Himself becomes solid and concrete to earth? I believe the central truth here has been seized with a fair degree of success by an Ashram poet at almost the commencement of his frail, faltering, fumbling, failing and falling existence at this place. The poem is called *This Errant Life*. It runs:

This errant life is dear although it dies;
 And human lips are sweet, though they but sing
 Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
 Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
 I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
 If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
 Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
 Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
 Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
 For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
 Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
 And all Thy formless glory turn to love
 And mould Thy love into a human face.

This is the eternal cry from below. And never before in history has it been answered as in our Ashram. For, the human soul would have been content with one Avatar face: we are given two! We are simply heaped over with a luxury of light. And if you want to have the description of the Mother's face, I think you will have to go to a greater poet than the specimen before you. You will find descriptions very accurate and very penetrating when Sri Aurobindo delineates the heroine of his epic that is a legend and a symbol. Read what he writes in *Savitri* about Savitri and you will have an idea of the Mother's bodily presence, the Mother's facial expression.

Now that I have touched upon *Savitri*, the topic with which I closed my last talk,¹ I might say a few things about it. In fact, I have already said some of them to a friend of mine a week or so back. He was sitting and trying to meditate. I went up to him and put him a silent query as to how he was. He looked up; there was a smile on his lips but a depression deep as hell in his eyes. And he brought out the great pronouncement: "I am getting on."

Well, it reminded me of an exchange I have sometimes heard in South India, the morning greeting among some Tamils. There is a lot of compression and intuitive packing in this exchange. One of the parties asks: "How are you, I hope?" (*Laughter*) And the reply is: "Somewhat, I am afraid." (*Laughter*) I thought my friend did seem as if he was in a bit of "somewhat" condition. (*Laughter*) So I asked him: "Why not tell me what exactly is the matter?" He looked up sadly and said: "The trouble is precisely that I do not know what exactly the matter is. All I can say is that several years ago I was in touch with a certain set of circumstances and personalities, and the result is an undiagnosable damage inside me." "Then perhaps," I answered, "I can help you a little." So I sat down and told him a story of my own.

It's connected with an experience which I recounted in my very first talk—my very first abnormal or supernormal experience: I somehow got out of my body and began to float in the air above my own form stretched out in bed below, and moved in the room from wall to wall, bouncing as it were to and fro. Now this escape got encouraged by a little practice of Yoga. After coming here it became more frequent and it was very enjoyable indeed while it lasted: I could feel free from all the cares of

¹ *Mother India*, December 5, 1970.

the world when I was out of the body. But when I went to Bombay and stayed there for several years, it became a little dangerous because the Guru's protection was not immediate. And there I found that I would loiter about in all sorts of unpleasant places. In those subtle worlds, you must understand, there are pretty unpleasant spots. There are extremes: on the one hand you find beauty surpassing anything that any poet has described—on the other you find indescribable squalor, filth, wickedness. Wickedness, of course, from our point of view—for the beings there what we call hell is really a heaven of perverse pleasure. And it should be so because these are not evolutionary worlds but typical ones, and God would be indeed unjust if He didn't allow them to get pleasure in whatever way is open to them. In Bombay, exploring these worlds, I fell into a company which seemed terribly hostile. Sri Aurobindo has given a hint in *Savitri* about such company: "their very look is a calamity." And these creatures, after showering their calamitous looks on me, got behind me and, when it was least expected, I felt a tremendous crash on my back: I felt as if my whole spine had been broken to bits.

I didn't know what to do; naturally with a shock like that I woke up and the subtle body rushed back to the fortress of the physical, but I was sick—and sick in a way that seemed incurable. What could I do? Should I call a doctor? The doctor would come and thump my chest and hear the sounds in my lungs and feel my spine and find it absolutely intact. Then all of a sudden I remembered that when you cannot have the privilege of seeing the face of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo, which can make whole every broken spirit, you can turn to the poetry of Sri Aurobindo—that poetry which is called the Mantra. The Mantra is the highest spiritual poetry, as you know: it is the Divine, as it were, expressing Himself directly, not through any other medium of consciousness. The Divine Being, getting embodied in words on the very plane of the Divine Himself: that is the Mantra. It is the Word from the Overmind, the Supermind's delegate that has been the governing Power of the universe so far.

I remembered also that I had asked Sri Aurobindo what plane a certain passage in *Savitri*—the description of Savitri herself in Canto Two of Book One—had come from. Very grudgingly he had admitted it to have come from the Overmind or rather the Overmind Intuition, as he very cautiously used to label the source of the highest poetry in his own works. The passage begins:

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflow the ways of Thought to unborn things.

It goes on to reach somewhere in its middle what I consider the Mantra of Mantras:

As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy

Inhabited with rich creative beats
 A body like a parable of dawn
 That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
 Or golden temple-door to things beyond.

Onward from glory to glory the passage moves. I recited the whole of it, and when, on the way to the close, I came to the line—

For even her gulfs were secrecies of light—

I suddenly felt cured, made whole.

So I said to my friend: "If you can read *Savitri* all your inner troubles will tend to disappear. But you have to read it aloud to yourself." My friend was surprised. "I have read *Savitri* several times," he said, "but I have never thought of reading it loudly." I explained: "That is the way to read it because the sound-significance is tremendous. It must go into you through your ears. You cannot just read it with your eyes—you have to read in a slow controlled voice bringing out the vowel-values, the consonant-combinations and the sound of the line as a whole. It is then that the language sweeps beyond thought to stir awake deeper tracts in you: it is then that the Mantra will wing home to you. And I can assure you that if you let it do so your undiagnosable damage will disappear."

I do hope it has started disappearing by now with short exercises of mantric incantation.

Now that we are on the matter of poetry I am a little tempted to make a digression. If the Mantra is the supreme poetry, there must be some quality of it in all verse—not directly but at least indirectly. Poetry by itself is not necessarily a spiritual art in any immediate sense. A poet can write all sorts of things which we do not associate with spirituality: a man can even be an atheist, as the Roman Lucretius was, and still be a major poet. How this could be is well hit off by the English poetess Elizabeth Browning. She has written about Lucretius's atheism that he "denied divinely the Divine." There you have the essence of the poetic utterance revealed. It is not the content, the substance, the matter, which has to be spiritual, but there is something in the form, something in the style, something in the manner which is as if a godhead came and said "I don't exist" and walked away and you saw by his figure, his gesture, his gait that he still existed and would ever exist. That is what poetry gives us—the perfect expressive shape, the inevitable rhythmic mould. And perhaps the same truth is also stated in another fashion when Flecker observed: "Poetry may not save souls, but it makes souls worth saving." It makes souls worth saving because it brings about a certain enrichment of consciousness, a subtilisation of it, a transfusion of beauty into it, which renders it very precious material for somebody who can really evoke and bring it out to meet its source, the Eternal and the Infinite.

This quality of the indirect soulfulness, the subdued or concealed divinity, has been sought to be formulated by many critics. Some kind of light is perceived as its sign. But the perception is variously phrased. A French writer, trying to describe what good writing—*bon le prose ou poésie*—should be, has said, "Claire, encore claire,

toujours claire!"¹ Well, I strongly suspect that when he made this pronouncement his wife was standing at his elbow and her name happened to be "Claire". (*Laughter*) Oh my God! what have I done? I have made a dig at petticoat influence in connection with a name borne by a lady in the audience, who is very charming but also very dynamic. (*Turning to the lady*) I apologise to you, madam; I hope my life won't be in danger. (*Laughter*) But the name gives me a clue, because it is one that means "clear" and yet is combined with the sex which throughout history has made poor man raise his hands in despair or scratch his head in bewilderment—the sex to which we may apply those words of Churchill's about Soviet policy: "a riddle wrapped in an enigma enclosed within a mystery." (*Laughter*) The combination of "clear" with such a condition of being leads me to another expression in French which, I think, is nearer the mark we are seeking. It is an expression related to Painting: "clair-obscur"—what the Italians call "chiaroscuro" and what in plain English is "light and shade". Poetry must bring a central clarity which with a sure grip upon our minds leads us towards a mystery which is beyond mind. The poet may de-clare his designs upon the "obscur" like the Negro preacher when he said to his congregation: "Beloved brethren, we shall now fathom the fathomless and unscrew the unscrutable!" (*Laughter*)

Let me, however, warn you against pseudo-mystery, the facile massing of shades, the obscurity due to confusion or carelessness. The true mystery is that which remains over, an indefinable numbus, when in dealing with heights or depths we have made our utmost effort to be clear. And even about this mystery I may utter a clarifying word. All true mystery is ultimately the Divine Presence. Now, to the Divine His own Presence is self-luminous: it is not a mystery in the ordinary sense at all. It is a mystery only to the mind of man. It is a supreme, a colossal clarity to the Divine Himself. So I should say that in order to be poetic we have to try and be clear in the way the Divine, when expressing Himself, would be clear and luminous to His own consciousness. And there again we come to the Mantra—the Divine's direct self-expression which in some mode or other should be found pervasive of all poetry.

It is indeed right that I should end on the note with which the French writer mistakenly began, and nobody with the name I have conjectured to be his wife's need feel let down by my analysis—for, if we are to get rid of clarity in every sense and if my analysis did any final letting down, what would I have to say to my own blessed name given by Sri Aurobindo: "Amal Kiran", which means "A Clear Ray"?

I will now, like a clear ray, shoot towards its parent Sun—the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—and give you a few recollections of my contact with them.

I shall begin with what happened when I first came here and stayed in what I have called Vasudha's House but what would be labelled in our Ashram English as "Old Amal's House" (*laughter*) because Amal, although only 23 at the time, had it as his old residence before he moved on to another place. In this house I saw a well,

¹ "Clear, again clear, always clear!"

and naturally with the vigour of 23 I pulled up water from it and with the equally natural rashness of 23 I drank the water! (*Laughter*) The result was severe diarrhoea. Perhaps this was an experience of purification—purification starting at the wrong end! I did not know how to check the process. So I sent for the Ashram doctor. The doctors in the Ashram now are innumerable. At that time there was only one and even he was almost invisible, because he was ever so thin. (*Laughter*) He appeared to be a being of one dimension attached to a wispy beard.

He came to see me. I was in bed. He sat next to the bed and then, as I was looking at him, he shut his eyes and sat like that for what seemed to me a rather long time. I got a little impatient and said, "Doctor." He sweetly replied, "Yes?" I continued, "I want some treatment." He answered, "I am giving you treatment"—and again shut his eyes. (*Laughter*) I imagined that he was thinking of the right thing to give me, and concentrating for the purpose. But he didn't do anything at all. So once more I poked him a little. "What?" he asked me. I said, "I want some medicine." "Oh, you want some medicine?" "Of course," I said—and he was so disgusted he got up and walked away with a curious smile and after a short time brought a bottle of medicine, which I can say was quite effective, a tribute to him. But from then I began to guess there was something here called doing things by meditation. The doctor's behaviour, his eye-shutting, was an eye-opener to me, and later I discovered that meditation could do a lot if the Gurus themselves meditated on us instead of our meditating on ourselves or on each other! (*Laughter*)

One of the instances was when, on a visit to the Ashram during the period I spent in Bombay between my original arrival and my second coming, I had one of my famous falls. This was a very bad toss. I was on my way to the Ashram gate. I tried to take a short cut where there was a gutter. Instead of going over the gutter I went into it. (*Laughter*) My left leg got so twisted at the hip that I had to keep sitting down in the gutter. Several people passed by but didn't do a thing. When the sister of the friend with whom I had come did the same I couldn't help protesting. "Don't you see what I am doing? I can't get up. I have fallen here." She said, "Why, I thought you were just sitting and talking. You sit anywhere and find occasion to talk to people." (*Laughter*) I was astonished. "Now, please do something and get me out of this place." Then she and some others picked me up and somebody from inside the Ashram came out—I think it was Dyuman—and looked at me and went to report to the Mother.

I had to be in bed, of course, for a few days. I sent for crutches from the Dispensary. The Darshan was shortly due and I did not wish to miss it. When somebody reported to the Mother that I was bed-ridden and didn't look as if I could change my horizontal position, she coolly said, "I am sure he will come to the Darshan. He is not the sort to lie down for long, he will come anyhow." When I heard this, I said, "I surely must go." So with crutches I went up to the bottom of the staircase leading to the Darshan Room, and then some of Udar's muscle-men came with a chair and put me on it and carried me upstairs to the entrance. At the other end of the long passage Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were seated. I was put down at the staircase-end. I

took again to my crutches and with as much slowness as I could reasonably indulge in I started moving, so that I could have the longest Darshan I would ever get the opportunity of enjoying. (*Laughter*) Laboured step after step, very dramatically gradual, I kept nearing the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. All through my crutch-propped progress they kept looking at me, the Mother sweetly, Sri Aurobindo calmly. On reaching close to their seat I felt a great power coming into me. But to my horror I found that Sri Aurobindo was concentrating on the wrong leg! (*Laughter*) You see, the right leg was the wrong leg and the left leg was the right leg! (*laughter*) — quite a confusing matter. And somebody facing me after my fall could easily report my right leg to be the injured one since my left leg would be opposite his own right! Anyway, what was I now to do? I just moved my really injured leg, but to no effect — the concentration was so complete! But I realised soon after that for the Divine it is not necessary to be omniscient in order to be omnipotent; for, so long as some leg of Amal's was being concentrated on, the effect was bound to be terrific. In fact, I threw away my crutches almost the same day and, using two sticks instead of my habitual single one, I came to the Mother at the next Pranam. I told her: "Mother, this is the first time I have had a fall in the physical gutter . ." She laughed and said: "Well, how are you now?" I replied: "I am much improved, but what do you think? Should I inform Sehra in Bombay about my accident?" She at once said. "Oh no. Why worry the poor girl? Within two days you will be walking normally." I was surprised at the confident prophecy. But actually it did come true — within exactly two days I was up and hobbling about in my old way, as if nothing had happened. This shows how spiritual force can work.

I may give you another instance. It was in connection with a tooth of mine. You see, I had a bit of tooth-trouble once and I went to our oldest dentist. Our dentists here have a very important function to perform, as you must be aware: their job is to see that before we become supramental we don't become supradental! (*Laughter*) The dentist examined my tooth and gave the verdict: "I find that your tooth has got broken and will have to be extracted." I said, "What, doctor? Say it again." He repeated, "Yes, it will have to be extracted." I exclaimed, "Wonderful! Never in my life have I had a tooth extracted. Now I will have this thrilling experience. Please, doctor, go ahead immediately." He worked at it for half an hour and brought out piece after piece until some pieces just wouldn't come out. So he sent for his wife to assist him. She came and they applied jointly a small chisel and hammer and he successfully got all the pieces out, as a good dentist should. Then I went home. After some time severe pain started. I thought it was the natural consequence of a tooth-extraction and that I just had to grin and bear it. The whole day passed and still the pain persisted. I didn't know what to do. I kept fumbling in my mind for a way out. I suddenly recalled that a day earlier I had received from the Mother a letter of only two words in green ink to a question of mine. The words were: "Not necessary." Somehow they got linked up with my present state. I asked myself: "Why is this pain there? It is not necessary. The Mother has spoken about it in advance."

I got the inspiration to put that paper on to my cheek, with the two words pressed against it where the gap was there inside the mouth. Believe me, within 3 minutes or less, the ache was completely gone. It returned only after 4 hours. Here was a little miracle. Evidently I had got in touch with the Mother's Force and it had passed through those words to my sorry plight. The next day the dentist helped me out.

I have some other incidents also to report but there doesn't seem to be time enough. I shall just go to another aspect of what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo can do with us. They can do the most impossible things. You know how the Mother made out of me a keeper of furniture—a role I could never have dreamt of. As I told you in an earlier talk, I became quite a good keeper, and many lessons too I learned during my furniture-keeping career, including, of course, a couple of falls. Several amusing occurrences too I could record. I'll cite one.

I used to receive appeals for various kinds of things from people. Our Pavitra once sent me an appeal. He was not quite a master of English at that time. He sent me the note: "I want four blocks to understand my table." (*Laughter*) I supplied to him what he required, with a reply-note: "Here are the needed blocks. Fortunately they are not blockheads: otherwise your table would never have been understood." (*Laughter*) Later Pavitra told me he realised the joke and greatly enjoyed it.

Now, what else can the Mother make of one? A big shock came to me when I learnt that *Mother India*, of which I had been appointed Editor, was to be a semi-political paper. I writing on politics was something unthinkable! I told the Mother: "I have no grasp of politics, no interest in it." She said: "Neither have I." (*Laughter*) I cried out: "What then shall we do about it?" She very calmly replied: "There is Sri Aurobindo. He will do everything." And he jolly well did—because I began writing political articles as if I had done it from my birth. I even came to be venerated as a political oracle. Every time I visited Pondy, people used to flock round me, asking my opinion on this event, that issue, the other situation. And I could deliver confident statements as though I were inevitably inspired. Within me I couldn't help laughing.

Sri Aurobindo could make a political thinker out of me as Napoleon could make generals out of mud, as it were. But I must say that there has to be a line drawn to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's power in such things—because once during a visit of mine to the Ashram, when Pondicherry was still French, she spoke to me very seriously at Pranam: "Both Sri Aurobindo and I have come to the conclusion that you should be the next Indian Consul in Pondicherry." I muttered inwardly to myself: "Good Heavens! This is really Divine Power running riot. I must check it. How can I be a Consul? How can I ever do such a difficult no less than dreary thing?" But aloud I just said: "All right, all right. I shall see what can be done." (*Laughter*) Rather dazed, I went to Udar, who was a very great friend of mine at that time. I poured out to him my bewilderment. He said: "Don't be afraid. So many of my friends have become Consuls in different places. Their staff carries on all the work. It is a job for absolute duffers!"

Udar's words were not exactly complimentary but he certainly put heart into me by knocking all head out of the job! As luck would have it, the crisis passed when it was learnt that in India you cannot become a Consul unless you go through the whole grill of the diplomatic service. And soon afterwards Sanat Banerji—no duffer absolute or relative—was appointed Consul and he was an excellent instrument of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother such as I could never have been in that post.

I think we must stop here. I may keep some stories for another occasion if you are willing to come again and listen. At the moment I shall say only one thing and perhaps that can be the summing-up of all my speeches as a Yogi. On September 17, 1934, after nearly seven years of attempt at Yoga I wrote to the Mother: "Pardon my writing to you without any specific reason; but I felt like telling you that you are extremely dear to me. In spite of my thousand and three imperfections, this one sense remains in me—that you are my Mother, that I am born from your heart. It is the only truth I seem to have realised in all these years. A very unfortunate thing, perhaps, that I have realised no other truth; but I deeply thank you that I have been enabled to feel this much at least."

Sri Aurobindo replied something which all of us might remember. He said: "It is an excellent foundation for the other truths that are to come—for they all result from it." And the Mother wrote underneath: "My blessings are always with you."

Well, I don't know whether the other truths Sri Aurobindo refers to have resulted from what I realised over thirty-six years ago. But the foundational one still stands and I hope it always will. It is the only compliment I can have to give to myself.

AMAL KIRAN (K.D. SETHNA)

A DEEP DESIRE

Thy service is my life-work, Lord Divine!
My births and deaths to Thee are dedicated;
Let nothing be in me I may call mine,
My being wholly to Thy light translated.

My busy dreaming days in Thee must end,
My waking nights be bright with Thy sun-smile,
My rosy morns in song Thy name befriend,
And eves in peace profound my toils beguile.

Let me be up each moment of my life,
My strength fulfilling but Thy will that knows;
I'll take as play all sorrow and all strife,
And meet Thy glance of grace in the murk of woes.

What difficulties dare beset Thy child?
Obstacles play for me a friendly part;
They re-enforce a nature weak and wild,
Build up a heaven-conquering hero's heart.

Relentless fervour for Thy work shall drive
My energies with never a thought of rest;
My soul in self-effacement's climate thrive,
While all that happens shall be for my best.

Thy name upon my lips shall murmur on,
Thy presence in my heart my movements guide
And carry me from dawn to brighter dawn
Triumphantly to the sun-world's vision wide.

By Thee I live, in Thee I dwell for ever,
In tune with Thee forgetting me and mine;
Time with his sword our union cannot sever.
My soul of 'love shall be Thy sacred shrine.

PUNJALAL

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PONDICHERRY

A SHORT HISTORICAL SKETCH

“PONDICHERRY was born long ago...It was absolutely dead when I came.”¹ Sri Aurobindo’s coming here on April 4, 1910, gave it a new birth. When, on April 24, 1921, the Mother made it her permanent home, it was assured of immortality.

The name, a nasalised French version of the local “Poudouseri” (New Town), occurs in another garbled form “Poudouké”, in the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, and in Ptolemy’s *Geography*, works of the first and second centuries A.D. written in Greek. It was, during these two centuries at least, an important centre of international trade and, according to Ptolemy, one of the three great ports opened to the West by the ancient kings of the land. This has been attested by the recent archaeological finds at Arikamedu, the old site of the harbour near the modern town. The poet of the early Tamil classic, *Silappadikaram*, gives a graphic description of another port nearby. “The sun shone over the open terraces, over the warehouses near the harbours and over the turrets....The onlooker’s attention was arrested by the sight of the abodes of Yavanas, whose prosperity was never on the wane. On the harbour were to be seen sailors from distant lands, but to all appearances they lived as one community.” It would seem that a similar description might apply to Pondicherry harbour. If so, the city was on the way to becoming a meeting-ground of nations even at that remote age. The Romans brought sweet wines in beautiful earthenware that kept the wines cool for the thirst of Pandyan kings.

But long before it could develop into an international mart, Pondicherry had apparently been a centre of spiritual knowledge. Local tradition associates the township with the Vedic Rishi Agastya of Vindhyan fame; he is supposed to have crossed the low hills into the South and ordered them to lie low until he returned, and he never returned. By a strange coincidence, Sri Aurobindo was described as Uttara Yogi, the Yogi of the North, by a spiritual man of the South who had a prevision of his coming, and Sri Aurobindo too never went back. A well-known Indologist, the late Professor Jouveau-Dubreuil of the local French College, is supposed to have traced the exact site of a Vedic college—he dared not affirm that it had been founded by the sage Agastya—to the very spot where Sri Aurobindo spent his last days.²

The Vedic associations of the town are attested by historical inscriptions....³ One at Bahour, now a little village near Pondicherry on the road to Cuddalore, affirms that there was on that site a college attached to a temple where they taught the four Vedas along with the ancillary sciences; this was in the 8th century after Christ. Ano-

¹ Sri Aurobindo *On Himself and the Mother*.

² Nolini Kanta Gupta, *Remunscences*.

³ P. Z. Pattabiraman, *Quatre Vieux Temples des Environs de Pondichéry*.

ther inscription, belonging to the 11th century and unearthed at Tiroubouvani on the way to Villupuram, attests the grant of certain specified quantities of rice for the maintenance of a temple college where they taught the Rigveda and the Yajurveda in addition to the Shastras. What happened to these studies afterwards, we have no means to judge.

Whatever its earlier associations, Pondicherry acquired a political significance with the coming of the French in the 17th century. It promised at one time, especially under the governorship of Dupleix, to be the gateway of an eastern French empire. The defeat of the French at the hands of the English during the Seven Years' War and the consequent destruction of the fortifications of Pondicherry under the terms of the Treaty of 1763, dashed the hopes of the French. But that served as a prelude to the conquest of India by Britain unobstructed by any other European Power; not even a Napoleon in spite of his far-flung intrigues could find a suitable foothold in India once Pondicherry was rendered politically innocuous. And was it not the easy success of Dupleix against the princes of the South that prompted Clive to try the same methods with the princes of Bengal, with results that determined the course of history?

The intrusion of the French had other far-reaching consequences.

The French, once their political ambitions had been thwarted by the English in India, turned their attention to North Africa first, and later in the 19th century to what became eventually known as French Indo-China in South-east Asia. What was of greater import to the future of India, they sought to save their face by trying to convert Pondicherry into an outpost of French civilisation. They not only introduced the French language as the language of culture, promoted large-scale conversions to Catholic Christianity, and succeeded in creating a large Franco-phile element among the local people. They also introduced "democracy", which soon became a travesty of the sacred name in the hands of unscrupulous leaders. Bands of hired assassins roamed the streets and spread a reign of terror which made it impossible for decent people to stir out after nightfall.¹ Full freedom was "left for a certain type of politicians and party leaders to make use of their opportunities to pervert everything to their own profit",² so much so that Sri Aurobindo had no hesitation in predicting that if the old state of things were to be prolonged much longer, "the Territory [when it came under the Government of India] would easily be turned into a sink of misgovernment and corruption and things will become even worse than in the past." Of Indian nationalist sentiment, there was none when Sri Aurobindo arrived in 1910.

Pondicherry had become a dead city in more senses than one.

Why did Sri Aurobindo come to Pondicherry of all places? Was it precisely because it was a "dead city"? Perhaps the answer is, yes; for was it not his mission

¹ Nolini Kanta Gupta, *op. cit.*

Sri Aurobindo, in a signed (unpublished) Note addressed to the writer, who was then Consul General of India in Pondicherry, regarding the future of the Territory.

to bring back life unto the dead? He has himself added some comments.

"I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my yoga, and because I got a very distinct Adesh (Divine Command) in the matter ..I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond."¹

Pondicherry had certain obvious advantages. It was French territory and remained so till the end of Sri Aurobindo's life. As such, it gave automatic protection to a political leader who was regarded by the British rulers of India as Public Enemy Number One. The British Indian authorities failed in their repeated attempts to coax the French Government to part with their First Citizen, in spite of the Entente Cordiale. This will be recorded by History as the greatest service the French people have done to the cause of the world's progress in all their long and glorious career.

Besides being a safe spot, it was also a quiet spot. "So quiet indeed," to quote an eye-witness, "that it is no wonder they should say, Sri Aurobindo had selected a cemetery for his place of Sadhana."² And it was a most propitious spot for the work he had undertaken.

"I think you know," he explains in a letter to an old friend, C. R. Das, written in 1922, "my present idea and the attitude towards life and work to which it has brought me. I have become confirmed in a perception which I had always, less clearly and dynamically then, but which has now become more and more evident to me, that the true basis of work and life is the spiritual,—that is to say, a new consciousness to be developed only by yoga. I see more and more manifestly that *man can never get out of the futile circle the race is treading until he has raised himself on to the new foundation.*³ I believe also that it is the mission of India to make this great victory for the world.

"But what precisely was the nature of the dynamic power of this greater consciousness? What was the condition of its effective truth? How could it be brought down, mobilised, organised, turned upon life? How could our present instruments, intellect, mind, life, body be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge and some mastery of the secret. Not yet its fulness and complete imperative presence—therefore I have still to remain in retirement....But still I have gone far enough to be able to undertake one work on a larger scale than before—the training of others to receive this sadhana and prepare themselves as I have done; for without that my future work cannot even be begun..."

The work needed for its successful issue the collaboration of one equally great as he, one who could embody in her consciousness and being the full dynamis of the Divine Shakti, the Mother whose Supramental Power can alone "rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and

¹ Sri Aurobindo on *Himself and the Mother*.

² Nolini Kanta Gupta, *op. cit.*

³ The italics are ours, as he seems to have given in this one sentence the whole sense of his Message.

falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda".¹ The one who embodied this Power in a human frame happened to be a French national. As such she too could carry on her work undisturbed in a territory belonging to France. Besides, within this territory were concentrated some of the most discordant elements of the present world which needed to be transformed into their divine equivalents. Others were to be brought in from elsewhere and formed into a closed group, the Ashram to be.

"A temple is to be erected and consecrated to Bhawani, the Mother.... To all the children of the Mother the call is sent forth to help in the sacred work.... She demands worship not for her sake, but in order that She may help us and give Herself to us. This is no fantastic idea, no superstition, but the ordinary law of the universe. The gods cannot, if they would, give themselves unasked. Even the Eternal comes not unawares upon men. Every devotee knows by experience that we must turn to Him and desire and adore Him before the Divine Spirit pours in its ineffable beauty and ecstasy upon the soul. What is true of the Eternal is true also of Her who goes forth from Him...."²

The Ashram in Pondicherry is that temple of the living Bhawani, where her devotees, the men and women who aspire to a new life on earth, offer Her worship, serve Her through their works, prepare themselves for receiving the new Light according to the best of their ability, so that the Light may spread and usher in a new world to take the place of the old. This is the *raison d'être* of the Ashram.

It might be asked: what was the necessity of founding a group like the Ashram when the work of transformation undertaken by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother might have been completed in their own persons first? "That is precisely the problem," the Mother explains in a Talk,³ "which faced both Sri Aurobindo here and me in France: is it necessary to limit one's road and reach the goal first, and later take all the rest in hand and begin the work of integral transformation, or is it necessary to go step by step, not leaving anything aside, not eliminating anything on the path, taking in all the possibilities at the same time and progressing at all points at the same time?"

The answer obviously did not depend on their personal choice. For, Sri Aurobindo had been accompanied on his voyage to Pondicherry by two of his young collaborators from Calcutta. He was joined by others as soon as the news spread of his coming and of the new yoga he was developing, and of a new chance for the spiritual seeker. Their numbers kept on growing, especially during the thirties; a number of women too joined. Sri Aurobindo gave charge of the Ashram and the training of the disciples to the Mother in 1926 and himself practically ceased to deal with their

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*.

² Sri Aurobindo, "Bhawani Mandir", in *Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir Annual*, Calcutta, 1956.

³ English translation, in *Mother India*, August 1970.

problems except through correspondence. With the coming of the war to the borders of India, there began an influx of children, mostly accompanied by their guardians, who found in Pondicherry a "safe" spot. The number of young people, both boys and girls in almost equal proportions, has kept on growing since; and with their coming the entire Ashram began to assume a different and more youthful look. There was also a sprinkling of Europeans and Americans, sometimes accompanied by their children. Even the Hippies have been peeping in of late.

This apparently pell-mell growth must have had a purpose behind it. The Mother has given a hint: "Things get done by stages· one goes forward, travels a certain distance, and as a consequence, takes all the rest forward; and then, at the same time, with a simultaneous movement, one travels another stage and again takes others forward—and so on... That gives the impression that one does not advance. But everything is on the move..."¹

The highest Light descending into Matter being the whole rationale of the transformation process, it had to proceed step by step, from the mind through the vital into the layers of the physical which conceal the depths of the subconscious and the inconscient. The deepest psychic being had to be brought forward, the inner subliminal ranges had to be made overtly active. The bedrock of the Inconscient could not be assailed and torn asunder unless the preparatory movements had been at least partially completed. This seems to have been done before the children arrived. With their coming, the emphasis has shifted, as it was bound to do, to the physical consciousness—the culture and training of the body, helping it to become more and more conscious and free of the pull of the Inconscient—and the necessary reorganisation of activities. This is a long and arduous labour, and the work goes on. Until the Inconscient is transformed and flooded with the Supramental Light, the work remains unfinished; with the conquest of the Inconscient, the world prepares for a rapid change, the Ashram fulfills its function.

SANAT K. BANERJI

¹ *Ibid.*

THE LOST CHILDREN OF THE WEST

THE EVOLUTION OF THE HIPPIES

*In the year 1964 the Mother, referring to the Hippie revolution that was then on its way in America, made the following statement: "In America the entire youth seems to have been taken up with a sort of curious brain-wave which would be disquieting for reasonable people, but which is certainly an indication that an unusual force is at work. It is the breaking up of all habits and all rules—it is good. For the moment it is rather 'strange', but it is necessary."*¹

To many people in East and West the Hippie² is a puzzle. His long hair and dirty clothes are regarded as an offence against the civilised life of modern society. If we want to avoid premature and misleading conclusions we will have to see the Hippie against the background of today's society of America, the country where he first made his appearance. American society, as is well-known, is governed strictly by rules of conformity in the way of life. But conformity always means unconsciousness. Revolutions are an attempt to get a consciousness of a special problem of mankind. The Hippie revolution arose against the unconsciousness of American social conformity. With long hair and dirty clothes as his symbols of protest the Hippie fought for the liberty of the way of outer life; he had become conscious that it had not to be just this way of life, and consciousness here means liberty. The revolution soon spread to other countries. But as the problem had already been partly worked out in America the other countries did not have to do the same work with the same force: they could take the consciousness from America. In this way the Hippie movement rapidly travelled around the globe. Today the Hippies have become an accepted part of many a social scene.

An Encounter*

EVENING in Copenhagen. Under the trees of the Nicolai Square the Hippies have gathered. They sit quietly on benches or stand around in small groups chatting. They wear sheepskin coats and multi-coloured silk prints. From a bar at the corner comes the sound of beat music. Two plain-clothes policemen from the Drug Squad, their faces pale and drawn, their hands behind their backs, patrol the square. According to the sensational newspaper *Extra Bladet* each evening thousands of rupees-worth

¹ *Bulletin of Physical Education*, February, 1965, p. 79.

² For want of a better word the term 'Hippie' is used here to designate one of those young people the world over who have dropped out of a materialistic society whose life, aims and values they cannot accept for themselves though as yet they are unable to replace them fully and to create by themselves the better world they hope for.

* This conversation took place in Copenhagen on 21-9-1967.

of drugs change hands here. A girl, carrying a bundle of yellow long-stemmed roses, approaches the policemen and hands them one each.

Flowers instead of drugs.

"Can one buy drugs here?" we ask the long-haired young man sitting on the bench in front of us. He shrugs.

"Don't you smoke?"

"Not any more. I can't face God with a pipe in my mouth. We have to stop sometime if we want to go this way. There comes a day when Hashish can't give us anything any more. At that point if we can't control ourselves we start taking stronger stuff. And then our way to God is destroyed. As long as we smoke we are not free and we must be free—free from our bodies—if we want to see God."

A girl sits down beside him. She can't be more than nineteen. On her arm she carries a baby.

"A friend of mine," she says, "who has been to Tibet has smoked for eight years. Now he has stopped. He just meditates."

"Is this your child?" we ask her.

She nods. "I had him six months ago in India. My parents sent me the money to come home. They wanted me to go back to them. But I can't. They don't understand anything—anything at all! I've tried to explain to them, very simply. I can't stand the way they live. Sometimes while I sit at the window and watch people in the street it brings tears to my eyes. They think they are alive, but they're dead. The whole world is dead."

"Your life gives you a lot of free time. How do you spend it?"

"It varies," the young man joins in. "Sometimes we spend it looking for something to eat or a place to sleep. There was a time when I was trying to get hold of Hashish to sell. But I got tired of it and stopped. When I have a place to sleep I sit and listen to music or paint and talk. Sometimes I read, mostly books on Christian or Indian mystics. The last book I read was by Aldous Huxley."

"Are you sometimes unhappy or depressed?" we ask the girl.

"Yes, when I think about people," she replies. "But that doesn't matter because I can sit and watch myself and laugh at being depressed. There is no reason to be unhappy."

"Are you sometimes troubled by doubts?"

"A long time ago I used to ask myself whether I ought to believe in God or not. After I came back from India I thought I had to lead an ordinary life again; everybody kept going on at me. But now I know that I can't turn back, I have to go forward. Since then I have had no more doubts."

"Do you have an aim?"

"An aim?" The girl reflects. "Perhaps eternal bliss—but here on earth. I want the real life, not people's idea of it. The ordinary aims of men are so wrong that they are absurd."

"We have to learn to know ourselves," says the young man, "there is no other

aim—for anybody. Perhaps not everybody can go this way yet, perhaps many can only follow it in future lives. If I know myself I will know the universe and I will know God—because I am a part of them—God, the universe and I are one. If we see the face of God we know what we have to know. And we are free, free from ourselves.”

“Will you reach this goal?”

“I am sure I shall. If I was not sure I would not go this way; there are many other things I could do. I could simply live like all the others—just going on without knowing why. They go towards a goal but they don’t know what it is. They go like blind men.

“In jail I read the Bible and I found something in it about the inner being of man, about God, something really true that speaks to everybody. You only have to look around and think in the right way, and everything becomes clear. You can’t say anything about it but you know it’s true.”

“What in your opinion are the highest human values?” we ask the girl.

“Love,” she replies without hesitating. And after a pause she adds: “Yes, love and self-discipline. If love and self-discipline work together we experience bliss. Bliss is the highest human value.”

“What do you mean by self-discipline?”

“Many things. Most of all control of the senses—especially control of sexual desire. The most difficult thing is the overcoming of desire, of the ego, so that you can be at one with everybody and don’t have to hate anybody any more. But we have to start with small things. With Hash, for instance. I must not have to smoke, I must be able to let my pipe lie.

“Self-discipline also means not to get angry if something goes wrong and not to get excited if something good happens—for our real life all this is unimportant. We must also control the feeling of happiness—I mean earthly happiness, not the happiness of God. I can’t do it but I know I have to. If I can’t learn it I will never see God’s face.”

“And what do you mean by love?”

“Love is not sex. Sex is stupid. It drags you down from your way to God. There is only one true love, the love of God. And when I love God I love everything in this universe—not for its own sake but because God is in it all.”

“I think we have to go,” says the young man glancing at the child.

“How old are you?” we ask him as they turn to go.

“Twenty-one.”

“And your job?”

“I am a sailor.”

A New Way of Life

Conversations like this can be held in many places in the world today. Para-social youth has awakened from the apathy of existentialist nihilism and is discovering its aims. Sporting badges saying 'I love you', the young people in their unconventional garments roam the streets of the big cities distributing flowers and polishing policemen's boots. They want to practise 'Flower Power', the flower being the symbol of their striving for beauty and purity. Their highest values of love, freedom and acceptance spring from these principles: nobody has a right to fight, to take sides or to decide about right or wrong. Their aim is a world united in love.

In many places the Hippies live in communes, bearing names like 'Children of the Sun', 'The World-Ship'. The little they possess belongs to all in common. Most young people in these groups have severed their connection with the parental home. At their gatherings, so-called 'Love-Ins,' they sing, dance to consciousness-expanding music and smoke Marijuana or Hashish. Many take an interest in occultism, mysticism and Yoga. A growing number attempt meditation. They practise nudity and love. Socially passive, politically disengaged they live, quiet and introverted, on the banks of the great social stream.

(For the present purpose we may distinguish the Hippies from other groups of young people. There are the New Left who organise demonstrations against Vietnam, the Atom Bomb and society in general. Their aim is the establishment of an 'Alternative Society' completely independent of the old in form and values. From the working class there come the Rockers. In black leather-jackets they squat in cafés or act the hooligan in streets and camping-sites. Their aggressive aimless protest against conventional society and its politics exhausts itself in the thunder of their motor-bikes. These with other less distinct groups make up the whole of the para-social spectrum.)

In an interview on German Television, Heinrich Ball, an outstanding German writer in his fifties, was asked whether, if he were of an appropriate age, he would become a Hippie. "Yes, certainly," he replied, "unfortunately I am too old." Today many adults express themselves in a similar way. Dissatisfaction with the falsified forms of life of modern society is no prerogative of young people. The world is dead—pop-star Marian Faithful complained as did many a religious voice before her. But the times have passed in which the forms of reaction of para-social youth exhausted themselves in uninvolvement or protest, and, besides, that was a small burden compared with an uncomfortable existence without home and sustenance.

(To be continued)

JOBST MUHLING

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1970)

XVIII

RAMA'S arrival was celebrated by the sages in Agasthya's hermitage.

The Priests uttered
 Vedic incantations,
The loving Rishis bespattered the ground
 With sacred water from their holy pots
and scattered long sprays of flowers
 in front of Rama,
as he softly entered the cool grove,
 into which floral buds broadcast their fragrance.

A feast was held in Rama's honour and after the feast, Agasthya spoke:

“Blessed indeed is my hermitage
 and by your arrival, oh, Prince Divine,
 my *tapas* has attained fruition.
Dwell herein, Sir,
and, if you do,
long will the Scriptures live,
so will Virtue
 and the laws of Manu,
the depressed Celestials will rise in glory
and the upstart Rakshasas will sink;
the seven worlds will flourish henceforth.
Pray, sojourn here in our midst.”

Rama pledged himself to wipe out the forces of Evil and sought Agasthya's permission to go beyond the hermitage and stay at a strategic spot where he could meet the Rakshasas half-way and confront them. Agasthya approved of this plan, and gave Rama the bow and quiver of Siva, which had been in his custody for worship a long number of years. He gifted to him also the mighty shaft with which Siva had destroyed the three aerial cities.

After making these gifts Agasthya suggested that Rama might take up his abode in Panchavati, where the Godavari river takes its rise. Kamban's Agasthya gives a vivid description of the scenic magnificence in which Panchavati is set.

“Up-rising trees
 and, above them, up-rising bamboos
 and, above them,
 up-rising mountain peaks;
 cool groves out-bulging
 at the flanks,
 With flower-clusters swinging
 and chumming together;
 a soft stream crawling by,
 with sleepy wavelets rippling—
 in this sacred setting, my son,
 nestles Panchavati,
 that lovely hermitage.
 Reaching that place,
 live there sweetly,”
 said the Rishi;
 and the one, whose skin was as blue as the cloud,
 bowed and left,
 with his spouse, whose speech was as sweet as honey,
 with his brother, who was full of compassion,
 with the loving heart of Agasthya following all the three.

The trio in their journey northward from Podikai hills to Panchavati went over numerous rivers and cascades and mountains like elephants either in a friendly file or in a deliberative assembly.

Miles and miles they walked,
 crossing
 lovely streams—some lying, some standing up—
 and mountains—some marching past in a row
 and others sitting around jostlingly—
 till at last they descried the King of eagles.

Out of the mountain range juts out a black hill and out of the black hill juts out a promontory, on which Jatayu, the Eagle King, is perched. Austere Valmiki sets Jatayu on the branch of a banyan tree and furnishes no description of the bird except that it is huge and powerful. But Kamban's artistic vigilance leads him to provide a grand setting to the bird, which in the course of the next few scenes is going to lay down its very life in the defence of Sita. The close-up of Jatayu illustrates

Kamban's great descriptive power and the vividness of his portraiture.

Notice the strong colour contrast between the black rock and the eagle, whose body is golden in colour and whose neck and head are impeccably white.

Upon the protruding peak
 of a black-coloured hill,
 Jatayu stood,
 shining like the Moon-draped peak
 of the golden Mount,
 with which the Gods churned the sea of milk.

Well-versed in the pure arts,
 poised and anchored in learning,
 truthful and spotless,
 incisive in intellect,
 he looks far, far ahead,
 like a seasoned statesman,
 through his tiny, little eyes.

His beak is ever-sharp and shiny. He has around his neck a garland of precious stones, which resembles Vishnu's discus strung with the nine planets that govern and regulate human life. He has on his head a crown, which out-dazzles the sun.

He is the very heap and load of Fame,
 which, as it rises,
 bruises and breaks down the words
 which seek to describe him;
 he is the offspring of Aruna—Sun's Charioteer—
 who, as he rises,
 bruises and breaks down
 the darkness of the night;
 he is the ancient one,
 who has seen many a geological age,
 each of which has sped past him
 with the fleeting brevity of a short-lived day.

As we concentrate our gaze on a hill resting heavily upon another hill and try to grasp its weight, the lower hill appears to sink along with the earth underneath it, for in the process of apperception the mind plays many a trick upon itself and indulges in illusions.

To one such illusion Kamban calls attention in the next song.

With deep suspicion the trio gazed
 at valorous Jatayu,
 under whose exuberant weight
 and unable to bear it,
 the towering hill sank
 along with the earth underneath it.

They wonder if he is a Rakshasa waiting for his doom at their hands. Or, maybe, he is the mighty Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Jatayu stares back at the warriors with equal suspicion and thinks to himself:

“They are armed with bows,
 So they can't be contemplatives
 bent on freedom from action.
 But they have matted locks;
 can they be celestials?”

In his daily flights to the different worlds, Jatayu is accustomed to meet the Celestials and their King, Indra. He is not unfamiliar even with the triple Gods, Vishnu, Siva and Brahma, but Rama and Lakshmana resemble none of them.

“By dint of their limitless charm and grace,
 they deserve suzerainty over the three worlds,
 and they have come hither with a girl,
 who bears comparison with the daughter of the Lotus.
 Who may they be?”

On a closer scrutiny, Jatayu finds both the lads closely resembling his beloved friend, Dasaratha.

Revolving kindred thoughts in his mind,
 his heart lovingly darting towards them,
 Jatayu asks,
 “Mighty Archers, who may you be?
 I entreat you to explain who you are.”
 “We are the sons,” said they,
 “of Dasaratha,
 the Emperor of the sea-girt Earth.”

Scarcely had Jatayu heard these words
 when he swelled with joy
 and descended to the ground

and, embracing both with intense love,
asked,
"Tell me, my chivalrous boys,
if the King of Kings
is hale and hearty."

"He died," they said,
"in the unforgettable establishment of Truth."
Hearing these words,
Jatayu became insensate as if asleep,
 breathless as if dead.
Embracing him,
the two lifted him with their strong arms,
and bathed his face with their tears,
and the Eagle King came to,
and burst into a thunderous lamentation.

In Valmiki's Ramayana, Jatayu introduces himself to Rama and Lakshmana as a great friend of their father, but fails to enquire after Dasaratha. On the other hand, Kamban by making Jatayu put this question about Dasaratha's health, creates an occasion for celebrating in a most moving elegy the inspiring friendship between the bird and the man. The result is that Jatayu is brought nearer to the reader by imagination and dramatic sympathy and the reader's feeling is effectively enlisted.

Jatayu mourns:
"Oh! Patron of Patrons!
Falsehood's Foe! Ornament of Truth!
Fame's Refuge!
By your unceasing benevolence
 you vanquished Kalpaka, the tree of Heaven;
the cool protection of your regal umbrella
 outdid that of the Moon!
By your inexhaustible patience,
 you scored victory over the Earth.
The Kalpaka, the Moon and the Earth
may exult in your demise,
but what is to happen
to Virtue, Benevolence and myself,
now that you have left us so helpless?"

As Jatayu thinks of his enduring friendship with Dasaratha, grief surges in his heart. A long time ago, Jatayu had fought on the side of Dasaratha against Samparan,

a Rakshasa of fantastic prowess. After killing Samparan, Dasaratha declared on the battlefield in the presence of his numerous royal allies, "Jatayu is my soul and I am his body." Recalling this pledge of friendship, Jatayu laments:—

"Oh, blameless King,
 the day you pulverized Samparan,
 you declared to the whole world
 you were my body and I, your soul.
 Your word will never prove false.
 Leaving the soul here,
 the foolish God of Death
 has but made away with the body!"

Out of the genuineness of his grief, Jatayu feels that Death has committed a mistake of fact, thereby indulging, not in an artifice, but in a spontaneous truth of the heart. Jatayu thinks that the only manful way to wipe out his grief is to leap into a blazing fire and perish instead of rolling on the ground and weeping like a woman. Recovering his senses, and pulling himself up, he tells Rama and Lakshmana:

"Listen, my sons,
 I am the offspring of Aruna,
 I spread out to all the worlds
 to which light spreads out.
 I am the Soul-Mate of Dasaratha,
 who rid himself of his life in order that the world
 might be rid of darkness.
 I came into being,
 when the gods and the different species
 of living creatures
 were created.
 I am the King of eagles,
 and the younger brother of Sampathi."

Listening to these words of Jatayu,
 the two folded their tender palms
 in reverent salutation;
 love and surging grief
 alternately filled their eyes with tears;
 verily did they feel their dead father
 had come back to life
 and presented himself to their eyes
 in the shape of Jatayu.

Enwrapping them tightly within his wings, Jatayu said:

“My sons, perform my funeral rites, too.
Here and now I will perish in the fire.
How else can I wipe out the grief
of my body-burden persisting
after the departure of the one
who was the single soul
to a double body?”

Rama and Lakshmana are moved to tears by the sincerity of Jatayu’s grief.
They ask him,

“Whom are we to lean on, father,
if you too should abandon us?”

Jatayu notices the sorrow that fills the hearts and faces of Rama and Lakshmana and consoles them by saying that he would join Dasaratha after the two Princes went back to Ayodhya. Then he tells them, “If the King is dead, you ought to have taken over the sceptre and ruled the world. Why did you come away to the forest, instead? I am perplexed and agitated by your predicament. He adds :

“Has any one caused you harm?
Be it the gods, the Rakshasas or
the denizens of the under-world
or whosoever else that has harmed you,
I will extirpate them
and restore to you the kingdom.”

Rama was eager to clear this misapprehension of Jatayu but he was loath to describe the cause of his exile. So he eyed Lakshmana, who unfolded the woeful tale and described all the distress that had been wrought by Kaikeyi. Though Jatayu was shocked by Kaikeyi’s misconduct, he swelled with pride at the lofty self-sacrifice of Rama. Kissing the crown of Rama’s head and, bursting into tears, Jatayu declared,

“Bravo! my boy,
You have covered the king and myself
with ineffable glory.”

Casting a look at Sita, Jatayu asks Rama, “Pray tell me who is this beauty.” He rejoices to learn that she is King Janaka’s daughter and wife of Rama and that despite Rama’s warnings she has devotedly followed him to the forest. Jatayu invites the three

to sojourn there and offers to place himself at their service. But Rama tells him that at Agasthya's bidding the three have to go to Panchavati and sojourn there. Says Jatayu:

“Excellent is that spot
 which is on the river's edge.
 Do go there
 and perform your great *tapas*.
 I'll guide you to that spot.”
 Saying so, •
 he darted into the sky,
 and the three moved on
 under the sheltering shade
 of his huge wide-spread wings.

Jatayu guided the three to Panchavati and, after pointing out to them the spot prescribed by Agasthya, left them in a lovely grove and went on a reconnoitring flight. Keeping his thoughts centred on his golden-breasted daughter-in-law and his sons, Jatayu started patrolling the vicinity. Kamban, who has the incomparable ability to get out of the human shell, now looks at the three from inside the tender heart and through the anxious eyes of the bird and says:

Jatayu watched the three,
 as the mother-bird would watch
 her fledgelings inside the nest.

It is through this ability that Kamban succeeds in endowing imaginary and legendary characters with life, passion and vigour, and in bridging the gulf between Man and Bird.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

THE POETRY OF JONES VERY

IN THE melancholy annals of American grossness, what relief there is is seldom spiritual; and, since any kind of relief is frowned on by the sovereign majority, it is not to be wondered at that when a man appears who is able to write from an experience of exceptional elevation and purity, his compatriots should not know what to make of him, and should very readily make nothing. This observation is rendered by way of introducing a few remarks about a man who was an arresting figure among, and to, the New England Transcendentalists, but whose reputation was soon arrested; and who, even with all the bustle and even serious study now being made in American literature, is still very little known.

Jones Very was born in 1813 in Salem, Massachusetts, where he lived until his death in 1880. The family was a seafaring one, and his father was a captain in the merchant service; the boy was early taken to sea, as destined for the same station. But he had little inclination to such a life and, his father dying before he had developed inveterate sea-legs, he elected to remain on land, and did so with his mother's probably hearty approval. He was a studious boy, and eventually he matriculated at Harvard College, where he did well, and on graduation was given a position of tutor in Greek. He loved the Greek language and literature, and is said to have been an exceptionally good teacher, one who was able to inspire his students with some of his own enthusiasm. An honorable if not illustrious academic career seemed before him. But it was not to be, and the onset of another kind of enthusiasm soon led to the termination of his appointment.

He had always been very pious and devout, by the Puritan-Unitarian lights that were dominant in his environment; and he was both extremely retiring and extremely noticeable. He was a man whom people would stop to look at as he passed. They knew that there was something different about him, even if they were not sure they liked whatever it might be. He carried an impressive atmosphere, and his unflinching sweetness and gentleness were powerful forces. There were those who expected great or at least exceptional things from him, both in literature, in which direction he was ambitious, and in the pulpit, toward which his thoughts were also directed. But there were none who expected or were prepared for the things that he soon began to give them. The retiring young man suddenly became a volcano: or at least a volcano by the standards of Massachusetts.

He had long been concerned with eradicating all self-will, and acting entirely and solely in accordance with the will of God; and he felt himself to be succeeding steadily, and growing more and more holy and perfect. His fervour of dedication increased, and suddenly in an overwhelming burst he felt himself truly to have arrived. He began publicly announcing that he was a man with a divine mission, that he was indeed the Second Coming of Christ, and that all his actions were God's actions and

his words God's words. His poetical productivity took a sharp upswing, and he declared that his poems were being communicated to him directly by the Holy Ghost. He denounced prominent preachers on all occasions public and private, telling them that they were ungodly, and did not know whereof they spoke; and in short, to the citizens of Salem he began to behave in what was a socially unacceptable manner, and to make an unaccountable nuisance of himself.

They were not long in reacting, and in letting him know that they did not agree with his view of himself, and of themselves, and of the situation. But if he was not insensitive to objection, he was impervious to it. To his vision men were imprisoned, or asleep, or dead, and society was a great desert or a blot. He felt himself called upon to improve men, and was convinced that to improve them was the only possible reason for any association he might have with them. His presence was more impressive than ever, but few could support it comfortably.

Almost everyone felt his zeal to be excessive, and his enthusiasm not altogether clear and sound; and of course, to many solid citizens there could be no explanation for his conduct, except insanity. Calling a man insane is always the easiest way of dismissing him, when he threatens to disturb one's complacency. It is an old story.

As Lao Tse said, if the common man did not laugh and jeer, it would not be the Tao. Unfortunately Very had not found enough of the Tao to be able to leave people alone, or deal with them subtly, in accordance with their natures and levels of development; and it was not so much laughter and ridicule that he was subjected to, as a more virulent persecution. There was a militant and influential group that demanded his forcible removal to an asylum for the insane. Here his mother protected him stoutly, and forced his enemies to a standstill; after which, it seems voluntarily but with persuasion, he entered a hospital, for the recuperation of his strength and the re-establishment of his equanimity. After a month he was sufficiently recovered to be discharged. It came to him that the Holy Ghost did not want him to play an active role, and he accepted a life of devotional passivity. He went home, and for the rest of his life remained quietly with his mother and his two sisters—all strong-willed women, lovers of nature and eccentric to their time and place.

His experience had been a shattering one, and he seems never to have recovered entirely. His fires were banked, and he seemed glad to be relieved of responsibility for making frontal attacks on godlessness. He led a quiet life, reading largely, and writing as it came to him. His mother and sisters did not doubt that he was a saint, and they were glad to have him with them, and to take care of him. And as time passed and the citizens became convinced that he was harmless after all, they too accepted him, after a fashion. As the years went by, he was now and then asked to preach from various pulpits (though he was never an ordained minister), and to write hymns for special occasions. He always cheerfully accepted, but he was always remote, as if he really had no part in the matter at all.

Tall and extremely thin, solemn and withdrawn, he walked the streets like a wraith. He seemed to belong to another sphere. Those who observed him felt them-

selves in the vicinity of holiness, but were not always sure that there was a man there at all. At home he sometimes sat for hours as inert as a stick or a stone; and he sometimes seemed, like Plotinus, to be ashamed that he had a body—or not quite to believe that he did have one. At the height of his exaltation he had impressed people as a kind of animated dead man—and in his retirement he reminded them of a volcano extinct. But extinct or not, he was not without a power; and it seems that no man could speak falsely with him, or chat idly. With him it was heavenly things alone, and this he communicated without words. Not that everyone was pleased, or humbled, or uplifted by the impression he made. Hawthorne for one found him vain and boring—Hawthorne who, though an inveterate and some might say incorrigible moralist and a respectable writer, had no authority in spiritual matters. But by and large he came to be considered a saintly man, and one of the community's assets. And so he continued, until he developed malignant erysipelas and left the visible scene entirely.

Though he eventually gained a kind of general acceptance, there was one group, the Transcendentalists, who accepted him, with various and varying degrees of enthusiasm, from the beginning. And his relations with Emerson were particularly significant, in that they led to the publication of the only volume of his poems that the world received in his lifetime. Emerson's feelings toward him were always ambivalent, and latter they cooled almost to the breaking point; for Emerson, though a Transcendentalist, was not very transcendental—and though a philosophical idealist, he was not a mystic; but in the early part of their acquaintance, while Very was still a tutor at Harvard, he was almost convinced that the ardent and saintly young poet was just the kind of man that he had been calling on America to produce.

During the time between Very's dismissal from Harvard and his release from the hospital, Emerson wondered whether he might not be insane, or partly insane, after all; and though he was of the opinion that, the world being what it was, it required a kind of insanity to be truly sane, he nevertheless was not altogether at ease about Very's "mono-sanias", as he called it. His idea of a spiritual man was one who was always in control of the situation; not one who was ridden or driven by a force beyond him, and could not move without being moved. He might have approved of a Zen Master, but Ramakrishna would probably have repelled him, however he might have enjoyed his power of expression. He was irked by Very, both in his coming forth and in his retirement: first by the "Brave Saints" attempt to convert him and enlist him as a disciple, and latterly by what he considered to be his vanity of modesty and quiescence. But Emerson was a perceptive literary critic, and he did what he could to encourage Very to write more poetry, and to give his poetry to the world.

Soon after his discharge from the hospital he persuaded him to bring out a volume and offered to edit it. Very agreed; but objected to having any change made. He wanted his poems printed just as he had set them down, even without punctuation, because he did not consider them to be his poems at all: he valued them in fact precisely because they were not his: they had been written through him by the Spirit,

and it would be blasphemous to tamper with them. Emerson asked him whether the Spirit could not parse and spell: and at last he agreed to a minimum of alteration—and then dissociated himself from the subject entirely. He was indifferent to the reception of the volume, and while he continued to write, he was not pressed by Emerson again, and he never published another.

(To be continued)

JESSE ROARKE

TWO POEMS

FLOWER

ON me her beauty
laid a spell
and I'll not attempt
to describe at all
the million laws
of Beauty her person
laid in reign
of persuasion
on her environment;
for her charms varied
and yet were many
closely-allied samenesses
in large cluster,
for it was all she
in perfect and lovely
flower.

MYSTERY

MY dear,
your movement
I do not understand
and I know
that while we two
exchange entries into talk,
we think we meet
but secretly know
our separate psyches
are veins in the body
of life that is Art —
they seem to meet
but just avoid submerging,
for separate are the strains
of several instruments
in a symphony
and I wonder anew
at multitudinous
mystery.

CHITRA

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

THE PLACE OF YOGA IN LIFE

(Continued from the issue of March)

WHAT is Yoga—and has it a place in life? In this age of technology and utilitarianism the value of everything is judged by its practical merits, by its utility in life. So let us see whether Yoga is only for those who live in caves and jungles or has it the capacity to endow life with something that is beyond the reach of Science.

Modern man has no time to bother about art, literature, Yoga etc. They are not the important things of life. They are for the exceptional few. Health, wealth, position is all that he wants. He does not know the true meaning of life nor does he care to know its purpose.

Yoga is an art of arts, a call upon the infinite to unfold itself in the finite. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not rob life of its riches. Its only demand is that all must be put at the service of the Divine. Work and worship must go together, must fuse with each other. We must learn to put God in each and every movement of life.

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga helps one discover what one should do for the fulfilment of life—irrespective of wealth, power and position. Only a man who knows how to mould his life into the right direction is born to be a man of destiny. Such are the people who live creatively.

Yoga is concerned with the quality of life. It enables one to discover joy even in sorrow. It is Yoga that can bring light into life.

Life in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is infinitely varied. It is a living demonstration of what place Yoga can occupy in life. Looking at the flower-like children of the Ashram at play in the playground, even a desert heart cannot fail to turn green for the moment. Those who have an eye cannot fail to marvel at the harmonious working of “Grace, Beauty and Grandeur” in the life of the Ashram.

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However hard science tries, it cannot secure for man that which is within the easy reach of a Yogi. Is there no way to bridge this gulf, this opposition between science and spirituality? Is it not possible to infuse life with the wealth of spiritual peace? It is a big challenge and Yoga must meet it.

What is the use of Yoga if it cannot solve the problems of life? The most valuable result of Yoga should be its utility to apply itself to any pursuit and be successful in its execution.

People are afraid of Yoga, but it is only by the practice of Yoga that the poison of life can be transformed into nectar, and the desert blossom into roses. Blessed will be

the day when science itself is spiritualised.

Science is the glory of material force. Yoga is the science of a blissful life. Material science can climb as high as is within the reach of the physical mind. It cannot cross the frontiers of the deeper self.

Yoga teaches us to take a leap to the beyond. It is by Yoga that one can open the rooms of the inner mind. The need of the hour is a life scientifically based upon spiritual consciousness.

To do Sri Aurobindo's Yoga it is not necessary to forgo one's *svabhāva* and *svadharma*. Only there must blow a new wind of change into life; all must be done in a spirit of dedication. No austerity but prosperity reined and controlled by the radiance of spirituality. That is why the Ashram does not reject science but embraces and welcomes all modern developments. All are harnessed to the service of the Divine, to spread His glory and splendour. And so faces with trance-laden eyes are seldom seen here.

Yoga is not a mere word. The more one plumbs its depths the more fruitful the experiment, the greater the discovery. Auroville is an extension of what has been achieved so far on the path of Yoga by the Ashram. Auroville is a call to those who have a hunger for a new life, a new way of being, a new mode of action.

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If by the use of mental faculties and power man can take a flight to the moon, how great and astounding will be his achievements if he plunges with the same zeal and rock-like determination to explore the science of the spirit!

Take a simple example:

Freud's psycho-analytic system helps us to discover what is going on within the unconscious depths of mind, which are responsible for much of our day-to-day actions, but this system does not show us the way to get rid of mental conflicts and bring in light there.

If the psychologists, instead of depending solely on outer means and mental efforts, resort to some Yogic methods, say, entering into the inner recess of the heart, awakening the intuitive faculty, then a curtain will be lifted from their lives, opening into new vistas, new horizons.

Let us hear Sri Aurobindo on what unknown regions await their discovery if they make this silent source the keynote of their experiment:

"If mankind only caught a glimpse of what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained this treasure."¹

¹ *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 3.

Again, he says in *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

“The yogin’s aim in the sciences. should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine consciousness-puissance in man and creatures and things and forces....

“The yogin’s aim in the practical sciences, whether mental and physical or occult and psychic, should be to enter into the ways of the Divine and his processes,...so that we may use that knowledge for a conscious and faultless expression of the spirit’s mastery, joy and self-fulfilment.”¹

Never was the achievement of science so great as today, yet how infinitesimal is man’s capacity! According to A.Walker the nearest star is four and a half “light-years” away, which means that it takes light travelling at 186,000 miles a second four and a half years to cross the distance to earth.

If man goes with the speed he has employed to reach the moon, it will take him 169 years to reach the nearest star and return to the earth, a fact almost impossible to grasp. The number of stars runs to billions. So what place can man’s achievements occupy in the Divine scheme of things?

However insignificant we may be, each of us is born with a destiny and there is no limit to the growth of his consciousness. The great example of Sri Auroindo is there for all to see to what height one can rise by the power of Yoga.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 127-28.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Liberator: Sri Aurobindo, India and the World by *Sisir Kumar Mitra*. Published by Jaico Publishing House, 125 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay-1. Also available at the Publication Department, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India. 307 pages, Rs. 6.00.

It is well to state at the very outset that this is going to be a friendly review. For, the reviewer himself, in common with the author of the book, is a humble follower in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo and concurs with Prof. Mitra in his estimation as couched in the following words:

“Sri Aurobindo is a truth too vast for the mind—a truth that by its very dynamism is and will be revealing itself more and more to the nation and to the world as time rolls on. Any effort, however well made,...is bound to fall short of the mark” (p.v).

It seemed fair on the part of the reviewer to provide the readers with this piece of background information, but he would at the same time very much like to assure them that this personal predisposition will not be allowed to cushion his sense of detached judgement so much expected of an impartial reviewer.

Prof. Mitra has indeed undertaken an uphill task in seeking to give us the biography of a Master-Soul, a Master in more than one respect, who himself once wrote while discouraging the attempt of a prospective biographer:

“I see that you have persisted in giving a biography—is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.” (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 351).

And that is the crux of the whole matter. For, firstly, a Master-Yogi like Sri Aurobindo moves and acts mostly in planes of existence beyond the probe of the discerning gaze of a non-mystic biographer. Secondly,—and this is most pertinent in the case of Sri Aurobindo,—the biographical trajectory of this Master of Evolution cannot in the very nature of things be limited to the span of time covering the period eighteen seventy-two to nineteen fifty: on the one hand it extends far into the dim past and, on the other, projects into the unforeseeable future. For, has not the Mother said about him?—

“Since the beginning of earth-history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great earthly transformations, under one form or another, one name or another.”

And so far as the uninterrupted continuity of his work is concerned, far beyond the pregnant moment of his shedding off his material envelope on the fifth of December 1950, he himself has hinted in no uncertain terms:

He must enter the eternity of Night
 And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
 For this he must go down into the pit,
 For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
 Imperishable and wise and infinite,
 He still must travel Hell the world to save.
 Into the eternal Light he shall emerge
 On borders of the meeting of all worlds;
 There on the verge of Nature's summit steps
 The secret Law of each thing is fulfilled,
 All contraries heal their long dissidence....

This mortal life shall house Eternity's bliss,
 The body's self taste immortality.
 Then shall the world-redeemer's task be done.

(*Savitri*, Book VI, Canto II)

Yes, so he is, the World-Redeemer: Sri Aurobindo is indeed the Liberator (in Mitra's phraseology). In these not too halcyon days when the air is thick with noises of 'Liberation Army', 'liberated zones', 'wars of national liberation', 'struggle for liberation' and suchlike, the appellation *The Liberator* before the name of Sri Aurobindo may perhaps smack of the arrogant militancy of a fanatic zealot; but that this is not so, that Sri Aurobindo supremely fulfils the role of a Liberator and that too on many levels of a progressively widening and ascending scale, will be made amply evident to any reader who cares to go through this precious though slender volume of Mitra's.

In spite of the essential limitations mentioned above under which every prospective biographer of Sri Aurobindo has to labour, Prof. Sisirkumar Mitra, a practising sadhak of the Master's Integral Yoga, drawing upon much hitherto unpublished material, has immensely succeeded in unfolding before the reader's mind, in an impressive style both sinewy and elegant, the developing drama of Sri Aurobindo's life. The drama started with the 'Prophetic Dawn' in which "Sri Aurobindo became conscious of his life's mission when he was only a child living in a foreign land. He also knew then that there was a work of God for him to do and that work was India's Liberation" (p. 33). A temporary close came with the 'Great Withdrawal' when, in 1950, Sri Aurobindo the Master-Strategist in the cosmic struggle for the establishment of divine life upon earth, voluntarily decided to leave his physical frame in order to better fulfil his ultimate mission—the mission of effectuating the transformation of the nature of humanity with all that it implies, including the prospect of 'the death of Ignorance' and 'the end of Death'. To quote again Prof. Mitra:

"It is his Compassion that threw him into the thick of the national struggle for liberation, his Compassion that sustained it to the end, his Compassion again that

plunged him into the work of world-liberation, for he knew that no single unit could ever remain liberated until the whole mass was liberated. 'The death of his physical body he has chosen to give the earth its life—its true life in the Light' (p. 246).

Prof. Mitra is no mere chronicler of events; a consummate historian, he always seeks to penetrate behind the superficialities and the temporal and thus brings to the fore all the high significances that lie hidden beyond the ordinary perception. Our author is nothing if not comprehensive, but what is admirable is that he is consistently accurate in his comprehensiveness. Also, he never allows himself to be bogged down by the sheer weight of the material at his disposal. Indeed, as a biographer Mitra maintains a high standard of comprehensiveness without being monotonous and dull; the scintillation of his style never for a moment fails or fades and he succeeds in sustaining the reader's attention throughout.

Prof. Mitra is no doubt a hero-worshipper, but he has displayed a remarkable ability to attain what has been termed "objectivity through enthusiasm". It is a measure of his book's substance and readability that it is impossible to read *The Liberator Sri Aurobindo* and not be moved to the core.

Jaico Publishing House deserves the reader's gratitude for offering to the public a book of such exceptional worth and that too on the eve of the Birth Centenary of the Master.

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

NINETEENTH SEMINAR

22ND FEBRUARY 1970

(Continued from the issue of 21st February)

WHAT IS THE BIG CHANGE FOR WHICH THE WORLD IS PREPARING?
HOW CAN ONE HELP IT?

THE six passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother pertaining to the subject of the Seminar, which were read at the end of the Seminar, are reproduced below:

(1)

I KNOW that this is a time of trouble for you and everybody. It is so for the whole world. Confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things. The better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil and the worse are prominent everywhere. The one thing is to hold on and hold out till the hour of light has come.

2-6-1946

SRI AUROBINDO

(On Yoga II, Tome Two, p. 693.)

(2)

I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort—for the present at least—to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things are bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible—and anything, however paradoxical, seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of, if a new and better world was at all to come into being: it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is, as in yoga, where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in

the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern, and that it must come by other means—from within and not from without; so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world, whatever the form it may take.

18-7-1948

—SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 693.)

(3)

What we want to bring to the earth can hardly be called a revolution, although it will be the most marvellous change ever seen; in any case this cannot be compared at all with the bloody revolutions which quite uselessly tear up countries without bringing any great change after them, because they leave men as false, as ignorant, as egoistic as before.

—THE MOTHER

(*Some Answers from The Mother*, p. 4.)

(4)

The one thing to be done is to open your consciousness to what is coming down, to let the change operate in so that the consciousness becomes a consciousness of peace and light and power and joy full of the Divine Presence. When that is there, then what the Divine wants to get done through you or developed in you will be done or developed with a rapidity and perfection which at present is impossible. The one thing needful first, all the rest is only now a field of exercise for the development of the one thing needful.

—SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Yoga I*, Tome One, p. 681.)

(5)

The greatest service to humanity, the surest foundation for its true progress, happiness and perfection is to prepare or find the way by which the individual and the collective man can transcend the ego and live in its true self, no longer bound to ignorance, incapacity, disharmony and sorrow. It is by the pursuit of the eternal and not

by living bound in the slow collective evolution of Nature that we can best assure even that evolutionary, collective, altruistic aim our modern thought and idealism have set before us. But it is in itself a secondary aim; to find, know and possess the Divine existence, consciousness and nature and to live in it for the Divine is our true aim and the one perfection to which we must aspire.

—SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Yoga, I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 409-10).

(6)

As from the mixing of various elements an unforeseen form emerges, so there may be a greater unknown something concealed and in preparation, not yet formulated in the experimental laboratory of Time, not yet disclosed in the design of Nature. And that then, some greater unexpected birth from the stress of the evolution may be the justifying result of which this unquiet age of gigantic ferment, chaos of ideas and inventions, clash of enormous forces, creation and catastrophe and dissolution is actually amid the formidable agony and tension of this great imperfect body and soul of mankind in creative labour.

—SRI AUROBINDO

(*War and Self-Determination*, p. III.)

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

EYE EDUCATION

RELIEF FROM BLINDNESS

WHILE many persons are benefited by the accepted methods of treating defects of vision by glasses and operations, there are some cases, known to every eye specialist, which get little or no help from them. These patients sometimes give up the search for relief in despair, and sometimes continue it with surprising pertinacity, never being able to abandon the belief that somewhere in the world there must be a cure. The rapidity with which these patients respond to treatment by relaxation is often dramatic, and affords a startling illustration of the superiority of the relaxation method to treatment by glasses and injections.

One case was a woman of thirty-five, from Orissa, a mother of five children, Her imperfect sight was accompanied by misery, insomnia and night blindness. Two years back there was robbery in her house and she was beaten. Since then she had developed a great fear, lost sleep and the vision had deteriorated; afterwards the condition became so serious that she was totally blind after 5.30 p.m.

She went to various eye specialists of Orissa but found no relief. However, she did not waste time when she came to know about the School for Perfect Eyesight at Pondicherry. Her husband being a railway servant could easily travel and one morning I found the couple waiting for consultation. When examined, her vision proved fairly good in normal light, but in dim light she could not see anything. Various relaxing eye exercises were given, and the eyes were bandaged for an hour twice a day. On the fifth day the husband reported that she could see all right in the evening. To test her ability to see in dim light I called them to my room after 6 p.m. She could see everything quite well in dim light as well as in electric light. It was then 7 p.m. Her husband suddenly pointing at something asked her, "Do you see that?" She began to stare badly and lose her sight; she was blind within 5 minutes. So the husband was warned not to test her in this way. After that she was left free. And now with two weeks' treatment she is quite all right at night, sleeps well, sees the cinema, and remains cheerful.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL